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CONTENTS

1932
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A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

The $5000 Slade . . . . . FOSTER-HARRIS 2
Among the Texas cattlemen it was known that no Slade could be kept in captivity. They escaped—or died.

Old Sugar-Foot . . . . . PETER B. KYNE 14
Private Kelly deserted his post in the Manila blockhouse because, he said, he was afraid of starting trouble.

The Cowboy's Bed (*An Article*) . . CARL ELMO FREEMAN 19

The Pariah . . . . . BILL ADAMS 20
In the turmoil of war, the ship's captain found himself forced to decide between three loyalties: His friends, his job, or his homeland?

The Broad Arrow (*Conclusion*) . . WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE 35
A novel of pioneer Australia. John Haxon, Robin Hood of bushrangers, calls for a re-deal in the hand Fate dealt him.

Three Score And Twenty . . . . HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS 51
The doctor warned the stalwart old patriarch that excitement might kill him. But his bed could not hold him when the mob broke out with lynching fever.

Fuzzy-Wuzzy (*An Article*). . . . . JAMES W. BENNETT 60

Extra Fare . . . . . WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES 62
When the new president took charge of the railroad people called it the Weary Willie. Speed was wanted, and Ballentine's motto happened to be "Shoot the works!"

Scalawag (*Part II*). . . . . GORDON YOUNG 73
Going on with a novel of the South Sea Islands. Captain Bill steers the *Merry Maid* into a nest of cannibals.

Mine (*A Poem*) . . . . . BERT COOKSLEY 89

The Camp-Fire 90 Ask Adventure 93 Trail Ahead 97

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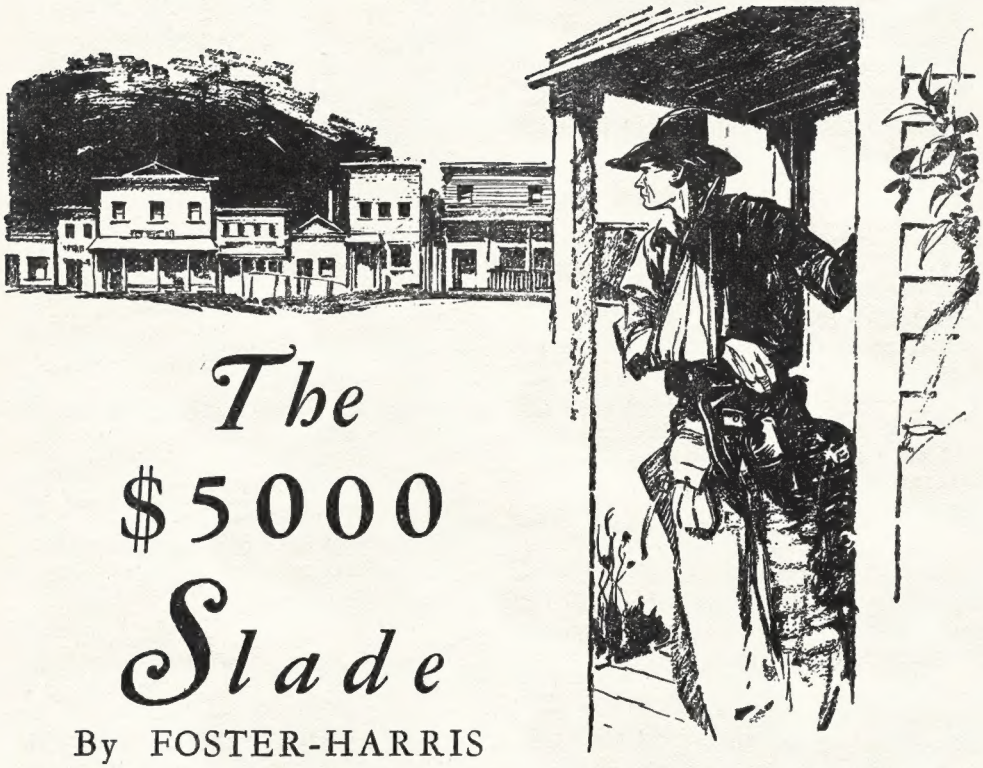

The $5000 Slade

By FOSTER-HARRIS

PERHAPS it was just unusual misfortune. But, somehow, it all seemed to come in a grim, measured sequence, step by step, like an inevitable predestination of fate. First, a Wheeler ran a Slade wagon off the road; then, there was trouble about the fence line; a lawsuit; the rise of the oil fever; the Wheelers' legal victory—bought, some people said it was—and finally the grim thunder of gunfire in the gray dawn; the retreating thud of a running horse's hoofs, and a dead man face down in the dust.

In the vanished days old Joel Slade had been a power in McLade County. Thousands of Slade cattle had grazed the endless thickets, the open pastures. Slade vaqueros had combed the brush, hunting cows, fighting bandits, administering at times swift frontier justice. The four Slade boys had been born, the oldest when Joel was thirty-eight, the youngest when he was fifty.

But Joel Slade, the old eagle, had gone around the Last Bend in the Big Trail, and the boys had not done so well. The Slade star had declined. Modernity had come with a rush into McLade County and had caught the Slades napping on their ranches.

Even in the time of old Joel there had been bad blood between the Slades and the Wheelers. The Wheelers, predominantly a town family, had been a power and money dynasty from the start. And the Wheelers, when times changed, had been wide awake and on the spot to reap the benefits.

Dan, the oldest Wheeler boy, had come to be the virtual political king of McLade County. He had engineered the deal which had taken the county seat from Thompsonville to Crusett. He had profited enormously on the Crusett oilfield development. He had been sent to Congress twice. When the pistol of Grayson Slade cut him down he was being mentioned as a candidate for Governor of Texas in the next election and his political machine in McLade County was considered the most efficient and

ruthless in the Lone Star State.

Gray Slade, on the other hand, was practically a pauper.

There had been no active hostility between the Slades and the Wheelers for years. And then, as though destiny suddenly had decided to break open all the old wounds, it had started.

Marston Wheeler, Dan's youngest son, roaring down the highway with his five-thousand-dollar roadster wide open, had run Breck Slade's team and wagon off the road, breaking an off front wheel and Breck's leg. Breck's attempt to recover damages had come to nothing.

Then Buck Wheeler, the second of the Wheeler dynasty, had discovered a defect in the exact boundary line between his ranch and the sorry land belonging to Grayson Slade and had promptly taken the matter into court. A long, bitter legal duel had ensued, complicated by the fact that in the meantime the Crusett oil pool had been discovered and the whole area swept by a fever of leasing and wildcatting. The disputed strip, so the geologists had decided, a matter of about sixty acres, was one of the most promising looking oil potentialities in the county.

A well had been drilled over on Buck Wheeler's side of the fence and had struck pay. Immediately the disputed land had skyrocketed in value, the suit had become a thing of supreme importance to both sides. And then, somehow, Buck Wheeler had won a sweeping victory.

Perhaps it was justice. It is impossible to say without knowing all the facts. But it was whispered that Buck Wheeler simply had gone to his brother, Dan, the political boss, and that Dan simply had issued orders to his creature, the judge, and to his paid henchmen on the jury. Even before the Crusett oil strike Dan Wheeler had been extremely wealthy and influential, and with the discovery his power had increased tenfold.

After the verdict Gray Slade had hurled the charge straight into Dan Wheeler's teeth. Wheeler had had him arrested for assault. Bill May, the sheriff, had kept him in jail two weeks.

And that was another thing . . . Even in the time of Joel Slade, the old eagle himself had remarked, rather proudly, on one characteristic of the family. Although there was no other reason at all for suspecting it, the old eagle had said that there must be a strain of Apache Indian in the Slades. "Because you can't keep an Apache penned up. If you do, he'll die."

An older brother of Joel's had died a Confederate prisoner in a Union prison camp, and during the World War Thomp, next to youngest of the Slade boys, had done very much the same thing. The Germans had captured him, badly wounded. They hadn't mistreated him, but in a grim, hopeless attempt to escape Thomp Slade had died. He had preferred death to imprisonment.

That was the way with the Slades. They were like Apaches.

There had been that jail sentence—and other things. Finally, as the gray, cold light of a cloudy daybreak stole over the sleeping little town of Thompsonville, that iron bellow of pistol fire, a shot, then two more, a split-second pause and a final shot, like an echo.

Then the racing beat of a horse's hoofs, dust spurting up in the gray dusk and men running out of the lighted restaurant. The stocky figure, face down in the dust, was Dan Wheeler; and the man on the horse, as a half dozen would testify, was Grayson Slade.

The first man to reach the dead boss was Jeff Orcutt, one of his henchmen. Orcutt had been sitting in Wheeler's parked car, some sixty feet away, too far to hear just what Wheeler and Slade said as they met. The gunfire had come so unexpectedly that, for a second, Orcutt had been dazed. Then he had taken a shot at Slade, but the light had been very bad and the rancher too quick for him. And then Jeff Orcutt had leaped out and done something else, something he would keep to himself and would cover with a lie.

He had sprinted to the stricken Dan Wheeler. Wheeler had had a .45 in his hand and one cartridge had been fired—that first shot. Orcutt snatched the gun and thrust it inside his shirt. He turned then as the men from the restaurant came running toward him, John Poole, the city marshal, in the lead.

"He murdered him, the dirty devil!"

Jeff Orcutt cried savagely. "I seen him do it! Gray Slade's killed Judge Wheeler in cold blood!"

Slade had been in the restaurant momentarily, and a number of those present had seen him meet Wheeler, although only Orcutt witnessed the actual shooting. Every one of those men, with the possible exception of Dad Colbert, the restaurant owner, was a stanch adherent of Wheeler's, as Gray Slade had known. Ten to one they would have killed him like a mad dog if he had stayed, and he had known that too. His only chance had been to climb his horse and run for it, and he had done so.

With the exception of Orcutt, however, it is probable that all of those men would have told the truth as they saw it—if they had seen the actual shooting. But they didn't. They did not even see Jeff Orcutt snatch up and hide Wheeler's betraying pistol. They heard the shots, they ran out to find Dan Wheeler dead, Grayson Slade vanishing into the brush —and Dan Wheeler without even a pocketknife on him. By all appearances, it was a murder in cold blood.

SO it was that at seven o'clock in the morning a reeling, lathered horse came up to the back door of Tommy Slade's weatherbeaten ranch-house. The rider, swaying drunkenly in his saddle, his face a curious gray, tried to dismount, failed and then called in a hoarse, low voice for his brother.

Inside, Tom Slade, the youngest of the Slade boys, was just taking breakfast to his sick wife. He ran out into the yard, jerked to a halt, and a high cry of alarm started from his lips. Above him, the doubled, swaying figure of the rider reached out a bloody, silencing hand.

"Don't—" It was just a whisper. "Don't let Ann hear you! Still! Help me—down. I'm shot, Tom, I—" Gray Slade started to fall out of his saddle.

Lips tightened until his mouth was just a puckered slash, Tom Slade caught him in his arms. He turned and laid him down on the warped boards of the back gallery. Gray Slade's dark eyes smiled up at him.

"Right side, Tom. Plug it, I— Don't let Ann hear you. Get a towel; fix me up. Got to ride. I—just shot Dan Wheeler, damn him!"

Frontier bred, Tom Slade already was ripping his brother's blood soaked shirt open. He took one look at the ugly, bleeding wound, under the arm on the right side, and then he darted back into the kitchen, poured hot water from the steaming kettle into a basin, snatched for some clean towels and some soft, old rags. From the bedroom his wife's weak voice called to him—

"Tom, what is it?"

He turned a quick, agonized face. Sick as she was, he could not tell her what had happened.

"It's—just one of the boys, honey," he answered, trying hard to make his voice casual. "Uh—horse got his leg cut on bob wire. Bad scratch, so we're fixin' him up. I'll be right back in."

"Oh. I wish I could help, honey," he heard her reply as he went out quickly, closing the back door.

She had always been that way, swift to pity, always wanting to help; and now she was . . . He swallowed a hard lump in his throat as he knelt by his brother. Trouble, trouble and more trouble.

Gray Slade was looking up at him, his dark eyes bright, pain filled, but calm. They conversed in quick, harsh whispers.

"Ain't bad, Gray. But the blood—you've sure lost plenty. You say you shot Dan Wheeler? What happened?"

Gray Slade's gaunt face twisted grimly.

"He plugged me first, Tommy. Plugged me and I—shot him twice afore I even knowed what I was doin'. Then his damned hellions started shootin' at me, and I had to run for it."

Tom Slade was washing the wound, drawing the edges together. It was ugly, a long slash across the ribs and then into the flesh under the arm. The bullet was probably in there somewhere, but he didn't dare probe for it. The loss of blood was serious.

"He shot first, Gray?"

"Yes. He'd drawed on me afore I even knowed what he was goin' to do. 'You damned, troublesome skunk!' he says. 'I'll kill you!' And then he'd plugged me, and I shot him twice and

that dirty killer of his, Jeff Orcutt, was shootin' at me, and more of 'em was comin' out of the restaurant—"

"You kill him?"

The pain filled eyes narrowed.

"I don't know, Tommy. I reckon I did."

Tom Slade turned his face away so that his brother might not read his thoughts. Trouble. This was bad, plenty bad.

"Who else was there, Gray?" he asked harshly. "Any of—our friends?"

"I reckon not." A hard bitterness came into Gray Slade's whispering voice. "Orcutt, John Poole, Bud Anderson, Linden—all his damn hellions. I better hide out till I find out what they're goin' to swear to."

Face taut and grim, Tommy Slade was nodding.

"Yeah," he whispered. "Gray, I reckon you better!"

IT COULD not have been more than two hours later that a high powered car roared into that same yard, dust spurting from under the wheels as it came to a sliding stop beside the gate of the pole corral. Two deputies with Winchesters were in the back. In the front seat beside the driver was Sheriff Bill May, and he too had a Winchester between his knees. He kept hold of it as he leaped out to face the tight-jawed man on the sagging back gallery. His voice was hard and a little too loud—

"Well, Tom, where's that damn brother of yours?"

A quick, dull flush of anger whipped across the gaunt face of the man on the gallery, and he stepped down, hands hanging loose and empty, deliberately coming over to face the officer before he spoke.

"You know my wife's deathly sick," he said, in a harsh voice. "You yell like that again—I'll kill you!"

The sheriff's gray eyes flared furiously. But he did drop his voice. He knew it was true that Ann Slade was desperately ill and, as yet, he had no quarrel with this youngest Slade. He repeated his question—

"Where's Gray Slade?"

Tom Slade's haggard eyes looked away. Finally he turned and asked—

"What you want with him?"

"We want him," said the sheriff, "for murder. He killed Judge Dan Wheeler in cold blood. The judge without even a pocketknife on him—"

"That's a lie!" snapped Tom Slade angrily, then bit his tongue.

The sheriff's pitted nostrils were quivering like those of a hound scenting his prey.

"So you know all about it, huh?" the officer's soft tone was somehow edged, a little too casual. "Well, well. Where is Gray? Do you know?"

"If I did, you think I'd tell you?" asked Tom bitterly. "Me knowin' who got you elected?"

It was the sheriff's turn to flush with quick anger. He took a step forward.

"I'll carry you into town as an accessory," he sputtered. "You get hard, I'll throw you in jail!"

He saw Tom Slade's set face go faintly white, saw him glance back quickly toward the house. One of the deputies dropped a lean hand on Sheriff Bill May's shoulder.

"He's got a mighty sick woman in there, Bill." The deputy's drawl was conciliatory. "Can't leave her alone, you know."

"Well, let him keep a civil tongue in his head," May answered testily. "Gettin' hard with the law that way." He was watching Tom sharply as he spoke.

Mouth pressed into a tight, puckered line, Tom Slade kept silent. But his head was slightly cocked back toward the house, as though he listened anxiously for his wife's faint cry. It was at that moment perhaps that Sheriff Bill May got the first inkling of his idea.

The second deputy had gone over to the gallery and was staring down at the weathered, warped boards. They evidently had been freshly scrubbed for they were not entirely dry. Yet, despite the scouring, there still remained several faint, dark stains. The deputy looked at May over Tom Slade's shoulder and indicated the stains. Silently his lips formed the single word—

"Blood."

The sheriff walked heavily over and stared at the boards, touching the stains with an extended finger.

"'Blood, huh?" he said, looking at Tom Slade again. "So Orcutt did hit him, after all."

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," countered Slade stonily. And again his head turned while he spoke, as if he listened for a faint cry from the house.

That was all they got out of him. Nothing. There was a horse in the corral that looked as if it might have been ridden recently, and there were hoofprints where horses had come and gone into the thick brush that closed in the ranch yard on all sides. But that might or might not mean anything. And in that thick, thorny, gray-green brush, mile on mile of mesquite, huisache, prickly pear, a thousand men might hide from the law.

Baffled, at last they left. Other parties also were searching for Gray Slade, and the word was spreading over humming wires to all sides, like ripples from a stone cast into still water. A constantly widening cordon. Gray Slade couldn't get away. But they hadn't got him yet.

AT NIGHTFALL they still hadn't found Gray. Heavily armed possemen were combing the brush, deputies were watching the roads in all the surrounding counties. In the great new courthouse in Crusett a hard faced group had gathered in the district attorney's office. They had locked the door and were talking in low voices.

Buck Wheeler, second of the trio and the man on whom the dead Dan Wheeler's political mantle undoubtedly would fall, was there, a glassy eyed, pudgy man. He was a banker. Joe Wheeler was there, the youngest of the triumvirate. Sheriff Bill May; Carleton Connor, the district attorney; John Poole, the city marshal of Thompsonville; a couple of others—all beholden to the dead Dan Wheeler. Dan Wheeler was dead, but the Wheeler power and money were going to go on—and they knew it.

"I tell you he can't get away!" Buck Wheeler was saying fiercely to Connor, the district attorney. "Nobody but his brothers will help him. They haven't any money, any of them! I know! They're practically paupers. It'll take money to slide him out of this, plenty of money! He can't get out of the county!"

"But the Slades know that brush, every foot," reminded the lawyer softly. "A man might hide forever—if Tom Slade hid him!"

"He was hit, we know," put in the sheriff. "He didn't go far. Tom knows where he is. We're watchin' Tom, but he'll know we're doing it. I'm thinkin' a good, big reward, if we don't find him ourselves—"

They didn't catch it. The sheriff paused, licking his lips. With a faint air of sullen callousness, he went on.

"Tom's wife's mighty near death, I hear. I hear they told him if he had the money to send her up to Minneapolis—"

Somebody breathed harshly and the room was still. They hadn't turned on the lights as yet in that office and the shadows were thickening fast. Veiled eyes were looking at the sheriff, who had turned his face half away.

"Aw, he wouldn't do anything like that," said some one in a casual tone of dismissal. "Tom Slade give his brother up? Hell!"

"I'm thinkin' he would," said the sheriff stubbornly. "His wife's mighty sick, I tell you."

"His wife's life—against his brother's." It was Carleton Connor speaking, a curious, twisting grimace on his young face. "What a damned dirty deal to try to hand a man!"

Buck Wheeler flared at that. He whirled, raising pudgy hands.

"Yeah, dirty, is it?" he snarled. "What about what that skunk, Gray, did to my brother? Shot him down in cold blood, and Dan without even a popgun on him, not a thing to defend himself! Tom Slade hiding a dirty skunk like that—why, I'd do anything to see him sent to the chair!"

THE next day, when they still hadn't found a trace of the missing Gray Slade, an order went in to Zack Anderson, who did the county printing, for some reward notices, rush. Somewhere Sheriff Bill May had gotten hold of a

sorry photograph of Grayson Slade. Below, in black, smeary type was the announcement: One thousand dollars reward for the capture or information leading to the arrest of Grayson Slade.

The sheriff that afternoon had some of those reward notices in his hand as he issued orders to Clint Garnett, one of his deputies. Garnett, a colorless man, was twisting his stained hat uncomfortably, and his gaze, as always, seemed to slide uneasily past his superior's boring eyes.

"You and Tom go out there again and just look around," May was saying curtly. "Ask him how his wife is. And then, when you leave, paste one of these up somewheres where he can see it. Then you might hang around in the brush awhile and see what he does."

The deputy nodded uncomfortably, twisted his hat and walked away.

"He went out and tore it down," he reported when he returned. "His woman's worse. We stuck up the sign like you said, but he just tore it down and stomped on it."

"He'll remember it was there," said the sheriff in a low voice.

The next day and the next the searchers still failed to find any trace whatever of Grayson Slade. Pudgy Buck Wheeler came into the courthouse, cold, white, raging.

"Why the hell haven't you got him?" he demanded. "Not a step farther than you were at the start!"

"We know he's right out there somewheres." The sheriff's voice was stubborn as he checked off points on his fingers. "He ain't gone far. We know Tom knows where he is. And nobody else does, not even his brother, Breck. We know he's hit pretty bad."

"If you know he's out there, why don't you go get him?"

The sheriff grimaced.

"Those Slades been livin' in that brush seventy years now," he reminded softly. "They know ever' prairie dog hole. We don't. We'll get him. But, if we don't —Tom's wife is worse."

The banker bit his lips and then a quick, hot glitter swept his small eyes. He spoke in a flat, hard tone.

"Raise that reward to five thousand, Bill. Five thousand, cash." He jerked around toward the door.

"And that's more than any Slade's been worth in forty years," he added. "Nobody'd need know it was Tom told."

"No, nobody'd need know," repeated the sheriff, with a dry, changed, significant emphasis. But his eyes were thoughtful.

Five thousand dollars' reward it was on the new posters the next morning. The search, which had lagged, took on a spurt of fresh energy. And one of a band of earnest seekers, encountering a couple of vaqueros on the banks of Dos Caballos Creek, answered their question with almost a paraphrase of Buck Wheeler's comment of the night before.

"We're a-lookin' for that five-thousand-dollar Slade," said the posseman. "You ain't seen him prancin' around loose anywheres nigh, have you?"

The witticism spread rapidly. That evening it was even on the lips of the lounging, patched nonentity, Joey Withers, who was one of the sheriff's secret sources of information. Withers "borrowed" money from May occasionally, but the Slades didn't know that. They thought he was their friend.

"Well, she's mighty low," he answered May's question. "Tom's got a Mex woman helpin' him. Old Doc Browning was out while I was there. He thinks she's gonna die. Way she's sufferin', maybe it would be a good idee—"

The sheriff's face was an impassive mask.

"Tom know about this new reward?"

"Oh, yeah, he knowed about it. I was just sayin' to him, 'Tom, it's a dirty shame you can't collect that money. There's Gray, worth five thousand bucks and somebody's sure to git it sometime and here you—' "

"What'd he say?" The sheriff was guardedly eager.

"Why, he looked at me funny and then cussed me like everything and told me to go plumb to hell."

May nodded. With a confidential grin, Joey Withers leaned closer.

"Gray, he's bad off too," he whispered knowingly. "Tom didn't exactly tell me, but I ain't dumb! Dan shot him purty bad, you know, and the wound—"

"Jeff Orcutt shot him," corrected May harshly.

"Orcutt, then. Anyway, he's bad off. I bet you if you watch close you'll see Tom takin' Doc Browning out to him sometime."

Sheriff Bill May did not comment. He considered it unnecessary to tell Withers the watching deputies had reported that old Dr. Browning and Tom Slade had started into the brush that afternoon but, evidently detecting their shadowers, had turned around and come back. Privately, he made a note to go see Doc Browning about that.

HE GOT little information and less comfort when he called upon the portly old physician in Thompsonville next morning.

Most of the medicine old Dr. Browning knew he had learned by practising on his patients. His worldly wealth consisted almost altogether of unpaid bills, some of them dating back into the nineties. He knew everybody for forty miles in every direction and he was, as he said himself, as independent as a hog on ice. It was a quality which did not make him popular with officials such as Bill May.

"No, I don't know anything about Gray's whereabouts," Dr. Browning answered the sheriff's question testily. "If I did, as a physician, do you think I'd tell you?"

"He's a cold blooded murderer!" growled the sheriff. The old doctor said nothing, but the sardonic flicker in his faded, hazel eyes somehow made May increasingly ill at ease.

"There's five thousand reward for him," said the sheriff. And then, trying to change the subject, "By the way, how's Tom's wife?"

Old Dr. Browning leaned back in his squeaky swivel chair and his disturbing eyes bored the perspiring sheriff through and through. He ignored the question altogether.

"I've never had a bit of use for you, Sheriff," he said frankly. "It's your duty to catch Gray, yes. Still, it's hard to believe you're that low you'd try to do it—uh—the way I just can't help thinking maybe you're trying. I reckon the folks that offered Judas the bribe weren't such fine people either."

"I don't know what you're talking about," the sheriff answered angrily. He left the office, wiping his neck with his handkerchief, his face a bright, embarrassed red.

OUT behind his sagging, weatherworn corral Tom Slade was pacing up and down, in his heart a bitterness that was worse than death.

In the house, under the influence of the narcotic old Dr. Browning had left, his wife was in a sort of drugged, tortured sleep. The Mexican woman was watching her. She had suffered with increasing agony during the past four days, and old Doc Browning very frankly had said it was beyond his power to help her, that she'd stay this way maybe a month, maybe six months, and then die. There was a chance that the doctors up in that famous Minneapolis clinic could help her. But the long trip, the huge expense . . .

Crumpled in Tom Slade's brown, thorn scarred hand was one of those new reward notices, now little more than a sweaty ball of pulp. Five thousand dollars! Out there in the brush, not five miles away, was Gray Slade, his eyes bright with fever. That wound was festering; a doctor just must see him soon. Sooner or later somebody would be finding him anyway. Joey Withers had been right about that. Five thousand dollars' reward, Joey had said. Five thousand dollars.

White, molten sunlight was pouring down over the endless carpet of gray-green brush as the day advanced. Tom knew that out there in those thickets somewhere Bill May's deputies were watching the ranch. He didn't dare try to go to Gray until darkness covered his trail. A deputy this morning had whispered that nobody need know he'd told. They'd just say they'd found Gray's hiding place accidentally, the deputy said, and slip him the reward on the quiet.

Five thousand dollars. There was a faint cry of pain from the house. The haggard eyed man turned. The Mexican woman was beckoning him from the gallery.

"She cries, señor," she said in her soft, anxious Spanish. "The medicine can not

make her sleep. It is bad!"

Late that afternoon, tired, dusty, thorn scratched, Sheriff Bill May rode by the ranch. He and his deputies had finecombed that brush again, and had found nothing. May was in a savage humor.

But the exhausted man in the yard who cursed him so bitterly somehow seemed to restore the sheriff to high good humor. He rode away smiling. Tom Slade was breaking, he thought. If somebody else didn't find Gray soon, well— It would be a real, big favor to Tom, in a way, give him the money he'd get in no other way on earth to take that poor woman out of there.

Fate twisted its inexorable threads. Ann was worse at dusk. Old Doc Browning, coming out, gave her a heavy shot of morphine to put her to sleep. His faded, hazel eyes probed Tom Slade's bloodshot ones in silence as he left.

The ceaseless whisper of Joey Withers's voice rustled across Tom Slade's brain.

"Five thousand dollars. Five thousand."

In the dimmed lamplight he could see his wife's face, drawn thin with pain. He went out on to the gallery, clenching his hands until the blood came.

Pain. An agony that was worse than death gnawed endlessly at his soul. No other way on earth to get that necessary money—and he loved his wife with a simple, fierce, whole souled devotion. But also, differently, he loved his brother.

The thought came to him—there was a man named Judas once and no doubt he too had his urgencies. Who knows how bitterly he may have needed that silver? Yet afterward, day, night, his conscience never gave him ease until at last he hanged himself. Judas—either way—

PERHAPS it was ten o'clock when he slipped away from the house, a canteen, food and fresh bandages in his arms. He melted into the darkness. If spies tried to follow, they were unsuccessful. He came at last to a patch of mesquite, no different from a million other patches, a spot in the center of which was a fox-hole, a coyote den perhaps, just a small hole.

But into this opening he squirmed carefully, feet first, dragging his parcels after him. He touched something—a blanket—pushed it aside and dropped. He was in a room, surprisingly large and dark and shadowy, a room in which a candle guttered and feverish eyes looked at him.

The whole region was underlaid with limestone. Through the ages water had leached out caverns, ranging from tiny pockets to enormous systems of rooms and galleries. Chasing an armadillo, Gray and Tommy Slade had found this one in their early boyhood.

Gray Slade's dark eyes were feverish. The wound in his side was infected and painful. The candle flickered as Gray dropped back on his blanket, lowering the pistol he gripped in his left hand. His brother came over to care for him.

They conversed in whispers.

"I heard 'em goin' by again today." Gray's eyes were on Tom's face. "Still seekin' for me, huh?"

"You're worth five thousand now." Tom Slade kept his head down. "Told you that, didn't I? Five thousand and no questions asked. They keep comin' and tellin' me."

Something electric, breathless, seemed to well out of the shadows. Gray Slade's feverish eyes were trying vainly to catch Tom's. Head stubbornly down, the younger brother fumbled with the bandages.

"How's Ann?" Gray Slade whispered.

"Worse. She wakes up and cries out, Gray. She, she—oh, God! I—I—" Tom Slade became hysterical. His head was on his brother's breast, and tearful paroxysms were shaking him. "They—they'd kill you, Gray; they'd see you burn without a chance—"

Gray Slade's eyes went wide. Black, formless shadows were boiling across their depths. His good left arm crept across his brother's shoulders.

Biting his lips, Tom straightened.

"I—I'm sorry, Gray," he whispered. "I'm a damn baby. Don't you worry; it'll all come out right somehow."

Gray Slade was smiling faintly, nodding.

But he did not smile after his brother left. He lay staring into infinite darkness, his breath a painful rasping.

Five thousand dollars for Gray Slade. Ann dying in long agony, and Tom without the money to give her the one chance for life. Tom, with the secret of Gray's hiding place in his head, a five-thousand-dollar secret and all he need do was whisper a word. Tom, who loved Ann with all his heart—yet Tom was the baby brother who had followed devotedly after Gray ever since he could walk, who idolized Gray, loved him with that utter completeness of the youngest for the eldest.

Life against life. Treachery to one against treachery to the other, and no matter what Tom decided, the agony of Judas beyond. Fate, dispassionate, inexorable, twisted the threads, scarlet and black and white.

A long, long silence. Then a rustling sound in the mesquite that covered the foxhole. Tom Slade must not be permitted to make that decision! The five-thousand-dollar Slade was coming out in a desperate attempt to save his brother's soul.

HIS plan was simple. Tom would not let him do it if he knew, so Gray dare not go to the ranch and get a horse. But somehow he must reach old Dr. Browning in Thompsonville without being captured or seen. Doc Browning was a friend, and could be trusted to do the rest.

But Thompsonville—ten miles away—to a man burning, half delirious with fever, so weak he could hardly stand, with a festering hell of agony in his side . . . Ten miles afoot through the brush, with a hundred searchers savagely eager for that five thousand dollars. Ten miles.

Well, somehow, he made it. No need to dwell on that endless travail. As the first light came crawling out of the east, Gray Slade was staggering grimly down a twisting wagon track not a half mile from town.

Fate wove in its last black thread. From nowhere a horseman materialized suddenly on that road. He reined back, uttering a hoarse cry of surprised recognition, snarling, "Hands up" and going for his gun all in a breath. It was Jeff Orcutt, Dan Wheeler's hired killer, joyously seeing five thousand dollars fall right into his lap. Gray Slade dropped to his knees, flipped up his left hand, and the two pistols crashed almost together.

Jeff Orcutt went down. A stupid, incredulous horror twisting his hard face, the gunman hung in the saddle an instant; then the frightened horse whirled, and Orcutt was on his back in the sand and the horse was racing away through the brush.

Very slowly Gray Slade came forward. Through the thick, reeling, gray haze of his pain he looked down at that face in the road. The gunman's bullet had gone wide, but Slade's had taken Orcutt squarely in the center of the chest. It would be a matter of a minute or two.

Orcutt fought to speak. Whatever it was, he never said it. A shadow went over those contrite eyes and he was gone. After a minute Gray Slade put the gunman's hat gently over the dead face and got to his feet.

Orcutt had been his one faint chance. Jeff had seen the shooting, had known that Dan Wheeler shot first, had snatched up and hid Wheeler's betraying gun. If Gray Slade could have forced the truth from him about that—But now Jeff Orcutt was dead by Gray Slade's own gun.

Smiling grimly, Gray Slade went staggering on. He came to the one short street of Thompsonville, passed a boy, saw him start with surprise as he recognized this apparition and then scuttle away like a frightened rabbit in the direction of the restaurant. Men would be there—the law. Then Gray Slade was hammering at the door of old Dr. Browning's office.

The physician came shuffling from the back room where he slept, struggling into his coat, his medicine case in his hand as he opened the door. His eyes went wide with amazement. Gray Slade pushed quickly by him, closing and bolting the door.

"Had to come see you, Doc," he said simply. "Listen! I got to talk fast because John Poole and a gang will be in here after me in just a minute. I was seen. Doc, I want you to do somethin'

for me."

Doc Browning already had shoved his visitor down into a chair and was starting to remove the crude bandages.

"Tch-tch!" he was clucking. "Kinda bad, son! You oughta come—"

"It's not that, Doc. Listen! I'm worth five thousand dollars, caught. If I give up to you will you give enough of the money to Tom so's he can take Ann up North to them doctors? Will you, Doc, please?"

The old doctor had whipped around, his faded eyes burning with a fierce, bright glow. His stubby hand dropped on Slade's one good shoulder.

"You know damned well I will, son! I'll get it and I'll give him every penny!"

There was the sound of running feet outside. A cautious, alarmed hail.

"Doc! Doc Browning! All right?"

The doctor spun around again, snatching up the five-thousand-dollar Slade's pistol, unbolting and opening the door. He filled it with his great bulk.

"All right, boys; might as well put up those guns!" he announced in a loud, clear tone. "I've captured Gray Slade myself. He's surrendered and he's peaceful, and I give notice right now I'm claimin' all that reward."

THEY put Grayson Slade in the hospital at Crusett under constant guard of two deputy sheriffs. The next day Buck Wheeler paid the reward. He scented something of a put-up job. With another claimant he would have tried evasion or delay, but old Dr. Browning was a man he did not care to push too far. And anyway he had Gray Slade, had him doubly certain now, for the murder of Dan Wheeler—with Jeff Orcutt's sworn statement even though Orcutt was dead—and for the killing of Orcutt himself.

In early evening of the next day Tom Slade, Ann Slade and a special nurse left for Minneapolis. Dr. Browning saw them off. Buck Wheeler knew that his suspicions had been correct. It is no more than justice to say that he did not care. He had no particular quarrel with Tom and Ann now; indeed he even sympathized a little with them. His enmity was against the man who had killed his brother—against Gray Slade.

But not all of the five thousand dollars had gone North. Some of it the physician had contrived to keep to hire a defense attorney, a brisk young fighter who said frankly that as the case stood it was almost hopeless, but that if Gray Slade could just manage to find some support for his version of the affair, why maybe—

Breck Slade, the other brother, was coming daily to see Gray in the hospital. Doc Browning had removed the bullet. Gray was recovering. He didn't seem worried. Breck wondered grimly. A Slade in jail—

What Breck had been half expecting came at the end of the second week. In a reckless effort, Gray tried to escape from the hospital. He almost made it, but not quite. They locked him up in the county jail.

Optimistic news now was coming from Minneapolis. Buck Wheeler was pressing savagely for a speedy trial. Old Dr. Browning was casting about on his own hook, trying to find some one else who had seen that gunfight—and he was doing something else. Without committing himself to a single, definite detail, he was getting it talked far and wide how Gray Slade had voluntarily given himself up to save his brother's wife, making the Wheeler bounty on one Slade's head save the life of another.

It at once counteracted the rumor that Tom Slade had sold out his brother. It was wonderful propaganda for the accused man. So much so that at the trial Gray Slade came out with a jury verdict that netted him twenty years instead of the chair. It was, so the defense attorney considered, a smashing and quite unexpected victory and it left the Wheelers furiously disappointed.

"We'll appeal that verdict," the doctor said jubilantly. "Boy, if we'd had just one shred of evidence to support that story of yours, you'd have come clear! We'll cut that sentence in two, at any rate!"

Gray Slade did not comment. Face turned to the little window, he gazed through the bars, off into the infinite sky. His face had become drawn during his imprisonment and his hair was nearly white. His brother's scarred hand

was on his shoulder.

"He'll have to stay in jail during the appeal?" Breck asked. "How long?"

"Oh, six months perhaps. Don't worry; we'll get a new trial. We'll cut that sentence too."

Breck Slade's hand tightened on his brother's shoulder. Curiously, at that moment Buck Wheeler and Sheriff Bill May were talking about the same thing of which he thought.

"I tell you, keepin' that hellion penned up will be just the same as a death sentence, Buck," the sheriff was saying. "They're Injun. They don't live long in jail."

"I want to see him dead!" Buck Wheeler answered in cold anger. "Dead, damn him!" His eyes changed as a thought came. "Say, listen, Bill! He's a Slade—he'd jump at the chance. Now if it just happened he did see a chance to—" He drew closer to the officer, whispering.

It was that afternoon that Joey Withers, visiting Gray, smuggled him a revolver. That night the news came from Minneapolis that the operation had been successful and that Ann would recover. And the next morning the deputy who brought Gray Slade his breakfast "forgot" to lock the cell door.

He did it rather well, but not quite cleverly enough. The instant his broad back had vanished down the runaround Gray Slade knew that it was a trick. An old, old trick, the way seemingly laid open for a successful break to freedom, but in reality not a chance.

Wait a minute! Yes, since he smelled the trap, there was a faint chance.

He fumbled the revolver under the blanket. Probably it would not shoot. There'd be men hiding out there, weapons ready, waiting. Gray Slade looked through his little barred window at the sunlight. He need not go, but if he stayed here it would be six months and then ten years or more in the gray walls of the State prison.

"Us Slades are like Apaches," old Joel had always said. "Can't keep us penned up. We'll git out—or die."

Free sunlight outside. Smiling faintly, Grayson Slade gripped the pistol he was almost certain would be useless and started toward the cell door. Outside, in the office, a deputy shifted his shotgun silently.

IT WAS curious that at just this time old Dr. Browning was revealing to the defense attorney the remarkable new evidence he had discovered. A bullet, a gun and a formal looking letter lay on the desk. The lawyer was examining two other documents the physician had brought in. His eyes were sparkling joyously.

"Won't have any trouble proving that's the bullet I cut out of Gray Slade," Doc Browning was saying. "That's Dan Wheeler's gun—everybody will recognize that. You can prove it was found in Jeff Orcutt's trunk, and there's the letter from the ballistics expert I sent 'em to, in Houston, saying definitely that that bullet was fired from that gun."

The young attorney's smile was spreading almost from ear to ear.

"Wonderful stuff, Doc!" he exclaimed. "And with these statements—"

"Those boys will come in and testify," said the doctor. "Jeff was drunk, and they both heard him brag he'd sure fixed Gray Slade. He spilled practically the whole story, they say. And they're thoroughly reputable witnesses."

The lawyer's blue eyes sparkled like jewels.

"Why, man alive, we'll clear him!" he shouted. "We'll clear him of both—"

The muffled, stabbing thunder of gunfire interrupted him, coming from up the street in the direction of the jail.

If luck had not favored the five-thousand-dollar Slade he never would have made it. But as it was, the primer of a shotgun shell snapped, a deputy, knocked cold by a pistol barrel, fell in the way of another about to fire, an unlocked car was parked at the curb, almost in front of the jail. Through that white, free sunlight it went hurtling away, with bullets screaming futilely after it. The five-thousand-dollar Slade was gone, turning a trap to his own advantage.

There was a wild, confused five minutes. The deputy with the shotgun, in the jail office, had a dislocated jaw. The jailer and another deputy had both been

pistol whipped into unconsciousness. Running out of his bank as if utterly surprised, Buck Wheeler crashed into Sheriff Bill May, waving an emptied pistol, cursing wildly.

"He got away, damn him!" May raved furiously. "We left the door unlocked. We was all set to plug him, Buck, but he—"

"Shut up, you fool!" Buck Wheeler's cry was almost a scream. "You'll—" He spun about, glaring with maddened eyes at the faces all about him, the amazed, scandalized face of Carleton Connor, the young district attorney, the grimly ironical visage of old Doc Browning.

"He already has, Buck," said Doc Browning grimly. "You heard him, Connor. Set a death trap for a prisoner, to murder him—" He broke off abruptly, glancing at the gathering, excited crowd.

"I reckon we're going to have a new sheriff, Connor, if you're not in with this crowd, and I don't think you are—very much," he went on. "And some charges against somebody else too, maybe." He looked at Wheeler. "Well, come on, Connor, it's prob'ly against all legal ethics, but I want to tell you about the new case we've just fixed up."

Half dazed, the young district attorney started to yield to the old physician's compelling arm. The sheriff uttered a hoarse, strangling cry.

"C'mon, boys! Don't pay any attention to this old fool! We got to catch Slade!"

"You'll play hell catching that boy again," said Doc Browning profanely. "C'mon, Connor."

An hour later, in the district attorney's office, Dr. Browning, Breck Slade and the young defense attorney were watching Connor's face. The defense attorney was fidgeting. He had protested vainly—telling the prosecution all about the new evidence beforehand did not set well at all with him—but Doc Browning would do exactly as he pleased.

District Attorney Carleton Connor lifted embarrassed eyes.

"I hope you'll believe me when I say I honestly credited Orcutt's story." He smiled wryly. "To be just, I think Buck Wheeler did too. We didn't know—this." He gestured at the papers on the desk.

"Gentlemen, unless I know nothing at all about Texas juries, that blows up any chance we've got of convicting Grayson Slade of anything."

Old Dr. Browning gave a satisfied nod.

"All right, son, we'll try and have Gray come back. But he gets bond. No more jail till this is settled!"

"That can be arranged with the court," promised Connor. "But can you find him? The sheriff's office hasn't, evidently."

At about this time two slightly crestfallen deputies were returning with the car in which Gray Slade had fled. They had found it, unharmed. But Gray Slade had vanished into his native brush.

With a faint, dry grin, old Doc Browning looked at Breck Slade as the district attorney asked his question. Breck Slade was nodding.

"When I'm ready to, I reckon I can find him," he answered softly. "He'll be out in that brush somewheres, kickin' up his heels—loose and free."

Old Sugar-Foot

By PETER B. KYNE

I BELIEVE it was Napoleon Bonaparte who stated that history is a fiction agreed upon in advance. However, the official opening dates of wars are generally not fiction, and for thirty-three years it has been proclaimed and believed that the Filipino Insurrection started about 8 P. M. on February 4, 1899, when a sentry of the First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry fired upon a group of Filipino soldiers who approached his post and refused to halt at his command.

In all this world there is but one person who denies this historical statement, and that person is Peter B. Kyne, one-time private of Company L, 14th United States Infantry, who, with the passage of years, has developed into the author of this story.

The first battle of the Filipino Insurrection occurred about 2:30 P. M. February 3, 1899, and I know this to be so because I participated in it and am, I verily believe, the sole survivor of that sanguinary conflict. We were outnumbered three to one; we routed the enemy in magnificent style and sustained no casualties, unless one might count a near-nervous-breakdown on the part of Private Joe Kelly and myself, who, led by Captain John Miller Murphy, constituted the attacking force.

The assault resulted in the recapture of the ruins of Blockhouse 14, one of the strong points on the old line of trenches in which the Spanish army defended Manila, and which the United States Army later considered the deadline beyond which Filipino forces were not permitted to advance toward the city under arms.

A combination of curious circumstances contributed to my appearance on that bloodless field. Lest some of my readers might jump to the conclusion that in relating this epic of unwritten history they discern a desire on my part to blow my own horn, let it be understood here and now that at the time Private Kelly and I followed the captain over that blockhouse wall and right into the brown of a numerous enemy, I could think of a thousand other places I would rather have been, for, rookie that I was, I was fully aware that the assault served no sane military purpose, that it was launched with much too small an attacking force, that it had no reserve and that it would, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, result in three new faces whining around the proprietor of Fiddler's Green, which is the place where all old regular soldiers and their harum-scarum lady friends are supposed to go after death.

In fact, I knew that the offensive never would have been launched if the leader of our force had not been named Murphy and if the doughty captain had not been a martinet desirous of impressing upon Private Kelly the heinousness of the latter's offense in quitting his post before being properly relieved. Nor would I have been a member of the little expedition if I hadn't snickered while the captain was giving poor Kelly the great-grandfather of all the rawhidings in the world.

Then, too, the fact that I carried on my right hip a pearl handled, .38 caliber revolver with a six-inch barrel, attracted the captain's attention to me; for I was a private, and in my regiment pistols were carried only by the officers, the sergeants and the buglers. My pistol was my private property and I wore it because I thought it made me appear swanky and ferocious. At eighteen one has such ideas.

I have a feeling now that everybody on the main guard of the outpost yearned to snicker at Kelly, for he was always excellent snickering material. He was about nineteen, six feet four inches tall and perhaps ten inches wide. His *nom de guerre*—Kelly the Match—best describes him. He had a baby face, with a small slack mouth and prominent teeth and was the soul of good nature.

For months we had been expecting the inevitable clash with Aguinaldo's army and, as the tension grew, we put out stronger and stronger outposts, until finally we went out a company strong. We had a field officer of the day, who would come around, mounted, at all hours of the day and night, to check up on us. On the night of February 2, 1899, Captain Murphy was the field officer of the day when we occupied the outposts.

IT SEEMS relevant here to say something about the captain. He was Irish and spoke with a marvelous brogue; he was a wag; he was a villain; he was adorable; he was kind and mean and old and disillusioned and soft-hearted and hard-hearted and the grandest fighting man that ever fingered a sword knot—we had sword knots in those days. He had been a private in the Union Army and had been wounded, distinguished himself and earned a commission. He walked with a decided limp—no, he didn't walk at all; he single-footed, and at sixty-four before he retired he always brought his battalion in from battalion parade at double-time for the last quarter of a mile.

He was known affectionately as Spud, Old Sugar-Foot and Old Cottontail. The colonel's orderly once told us that while he was within hearing Spud came into the colonel's office and said:

"Currnel, the min call me Auld Sugar-Foot an' Auld Cottontail. I want it shtopped."

And the old man looked up wearily and said:

"Good Lord, Murphy, that's nothing. You should hear what they call me!"

Spud Murphy was one of the tragedies of the Old Army. A private in '61, a captain in '99, and not even retired a major. He had commanded F Company for almost twenty years. F Company was just F Company while it behaved itself, and "me poor lads" when it didn't. F Company was nearly all Irish and a man was a recruit until his third enlistment. F Company loved Spud because he rated it and also because they knew he loved F Company, but the rest of us were just a little bit afraid of him. By the rest of us I mean the men who, like myself, had enlisted for three years or until the war with Spain should be over. I think Spud regarded it as his Christian duty to make soldiers out of us.

I loathed outpost duty for two reasons: First, I was always afraid a native would sneak up on me, alone in the bush, and scupper me with a bolo; and second, because Spud was frequently our field officer of the day and a visitation from him at two o'clock in the morning was something to remember.

Just at twilight on February 2, 1899, Spud took it into his head to put out a new outpost about six hundred yards in front of our main chain of posts and within about a hundred yards of the Filipino forces. It was to be withdrawn at dawn, and we were supposed to keep it a great secret; so much so, in fact, that, strange as it may seem, we had

strict orders not to load our pieces on post. If attacked we were to defend ourselves as best we could with bayonet or butt; but under no circumstances were we to fire our pieces, because that would, undoubtedly, start the impending war, which the United States was most anxious not to start.

I drew the advanced post that night and promptly put five cartridges in the chamber and one in the breech, turned the cut-off over and decided that if I were attacked I'd start the war, orders to the contrary notwithstanding. About 2 A. M. Spud pussyfooted up on me to see if all was well. He asked—

"Sinthry, is your piece loaded?"

For a moment I was tempted to lie and reply in the negative, but I recalled that this old man would be the one field officer of the day to doubt my veracity and make me prove it. So I confessed.

"Unload your piece," he snarled.

I had it half unloaded when he reached out and in Stygian darkness touched my shoulder paternally.

"Never mind, son, never mind. Sure ye'll only load it agin the minute I'm gone. Sure, I have Hogan's Alley on this guard tonight, an' what else could I expect of me own?"

For reasons best known to himself, Spud must have decided that night that there was no sound reason for maintaining an outpost in that vicinity by night and withdrawing it at dawn. His nature was always against withdrawals or timidity. So, at daylight, he ordered Tom Hoar, the sergeant of the guard, to place a sentry in the ruins of Blockhouse 14, just about a hundred yards in front of the Filipino lines but, by agreement, in our territory. The orders of this lone sentry were to keep armed Filipinos out of Blockhouse 14. What curious psychology dictated this course will never be known, for Spud died a long time ago; but I think I caught a glimpse of it at 2:30 P. M. on February third.

I was off guard and lolling around in the grass with the main guard, listening to untruthful tales of adventures in the arena of illicit love, when somebody piped up:

"Turn out the guard! Field officer of the day!"

Sure enough, there came Spud on his little blue roan Filipino pony. So we formed up and gave him a present, and he looked us over and told the sergeant to dismiss us.

Suddenly he stiffened in his saddle.

"Sergeant," said he, "who the divil is that enlisted man comin' like a typhoon?"

He pointed, and we all looked. Coming up the glade at forty miles an hour was Private Kelly the Match.

"He seems in a hurry," Spud murmured. "An' yet, Sergeant, it seems he's not pursued. Can it be that he's the bearer av bad news?"

"That must be it, sir," the sergeant replied. "That soldier is Private Kelly. He was on outpost in the blockhouse, and why he left his post I do not know."

"Faith, we'll soon find out, Sergeant," said Spud coldly. And then the Match arrived, gasping after a hundred-yard sprint in the sun.

As the honor of the outfit was at stake, the sergeant, who was an old soldier, glared at the Match and roared:

"What in the hell, Kelly, do you mean by desertin' your post before you were properly relieved? You know your general orders."

"I—I—co—couldn't help it, Sergeant," the Match gasped. "Filipino *teniente* an' eight privates come into—the—the blockhouse—an' kicked my—ah—tail out—of there."

The dread tale was done. Spud looked at the sergeant. The sergeant hung his head.

"An' you stood for it?" Spud queried in honeyed accents.

"Wha-what was I to do sir? There were eight—an' the *teniente*. He told me to *vamos*, an' I did!"

"Ye might have blown his damned brains out," yelled Spud, "an' thin fired into the others. Ye might have tackled thim wit' bayonet an' butt. For what the hell else are ye a soger for? Do ye imagine the life av the likes av ye, ye long, thin, gawkin' young sprig, is a matther av any importance? Ye've disgraced us, so ye have!"

Well, Kelly was as Irish as Spud, although once removed.

"I had to make a decision, sir. My orders were not to start a war."

"Ye wouldn't have shtarted a war. 'Tis they that had already shtarted it. Do ye not know that a shtate av war existed the minute they rushed the blockhouse an' overpowered ye an' threw ye out. An' what did you do? Answer me that, now. Shut up! Not a worrd out av you! Do ye not know that for desertin' yer post, wit'out bein' properly relieved an' in time av war, ye have committed a gineral coort-martial offinse an' that the punishmint is death—or such other punishmint as the coort may see wise to inflict?"

Kelly commenced to tremble violently. He closed his funny slack mouth and then let it sag again.

"Pin up yer lip!" roared Spud. "Don't look at the field officer av the day like a baboon. Nine to wan is the right odds, an' a sinse av self-respect should have indicated acceptance av the challinge. Did ye not realize that the rest av yer coomrades would have hearrd the firin' an' come down to help ye out?"

"By that time, sir, I would have been dead."

"We'd have avinged ye, me lad."

That was when I snickered. Although there is a strain of French Huguenot in me, my ancestors since around 1700 have been speaking Gaelic, and I know a joke when I hear it. What's more I appreciate it.

"So," said Spud, turning savagely on me, "an' for why should you laugh at this poor lad? Is it likely ye'd have exercised the same amount av diplomacy an' discretion in the same emergency? At least he had sinse enough not to shtart a war. He had sufficient delicacy to lave that to the field officer av the day. Where'd ye get that pistol ye're wearin'—an' who aut'orized ye to wear it?"

"I paid ten dollars gold for it, sir, and I wear it because nobody has told me not to. It might come in handy."

"What do ye use it for other than decoration?"

"To shoot Filipino chickens with, sir," I replied. "The regulations forbid us to waste government ammunition, and I buy my own in Manila."

"The regulations forbid lootin'—which is another name for shootin' an' atin' the poultry av a peaceful people wit' whom we're not at war." He turned to the Match. "Pull yerself together, lad, an' get yer breath back. I'm goin' to overlook yer offinse this time, but have a care would it happen agin!"

HE PULLED out a La Princessa cigar and smoked it for about three minutes, then crooked a forefinger at me.

"I'll want you for a horse-holder," he said grimly. "Take yer piece an' yer bayonet an' yer pistol an' come wit' me. Faith, I'll give ye somethin' to laugh at. Kelly, me boy, fall in behind me an' follow. I'm goin' to put ye back on the post ye have so shamefully deserted."

The sergeant was horrified.

"Don't you think, sir, the rest of us ought to go with you?"

"Thank ye kindly, Sergeant. Ye have the proper spirit, but sure I'll not need ye. There's but nine av thim. 'Twill be time enough for ye an' yer guard to come down if we don't come back."

And he spurred away, with Kelly and Kyne jogging along at his pony's heels.

Before I could become sick at my stomach we were in front of the ruined blockhouse. It was merely a rectangle of mud walls about four and a half feet high, with an opening through the wall that faced us. Behind that wall and on each side of the opening stood four Filipino soldiers peering at us; I could see the tips of their long Remington bayonets, and both the men and the bayonets looked very business-like. The *teniente* —a young man about twenty-five, nicely uniformed, with a pistol on his right hip and a big Spanish cavalry saber on his left—stood in the entrance, smoking languidly and eyeing us impersonally. A fool could see that he had no intention of evacuating out of respect to an old captain and two boys.

Spud pulled up and tossed the reins over his pony's head. I ran up to seize them.

"Give me a leg down," the ancient warrior commanded.

That gimpy hip of his made it just a little bit difficult for him to mount or dismount. I eased him down.

"Guard me rear," he then said. "I'm goin' to tackle the *teniente,* an' if they close in on me do you two lads fly at it

from both sides."

He strode up to the *teniente.*

"Clear out av this, ye young vagabone," he roared, and with a right swing put that *teniente* on his back.

He leaped inside and pulled his pistol and waded in on the four to his left, tapping most sociably with the long barrel, punching, kicking, kneeing. Kelly and I screeched in horror and pity for Spud and ran up the wall to jab at the four on the right of the entrance, although personally I had my misgivings as to the ruin I could accomplish with the bayonet, for our bayonets were very dull and were never used for any purpose other than opening tinned rations.

They didn't stand! They were much too amazed at the suddenness and ferocity of our attack, although what I really think did the trick was the feline squalling of Kelly and me. We squalled because we were scared to death. Over the wall we went; we jabbed, poked, hammered with our butts, accomplishing nothing beyond a few scratches and bruises on the enemy's rear . . . The *teniente* got up, made a run for the opposite wall and cleared it like a steeplechaser, aided a bit, I make no doubt, by Spud's Colt hurled at him.

His men followed him. They went over that wall like rats and like rats they disappeared in the bush whence they had come. And not a shot had been fired!

Spud was pleased. He assured us we had done well.

"Ye see, my son," said he to the Match, "how easily 'tis done? The assault, me lad, the assault. Always the assault. Those pock-marked divils knew they had no business here—an' sure their uneasy consciences helped them over the wall as much as we did."

He puffed at his cigar. It had not been out of his mouth during the ruckus. It was still burning! I retrieved his pistol and wiped the dust off it. He shoved it back in his holster.

"Now, Private," said he, "ye're back on yer post, an' heaven help ye if ye leave it again until ye're properly relieved. I've gotten ye out av a hell av a scrape an' were it not for the sogerly manner in which ye have since conducted ye'rself I'd be inclined to make an example av ye. Take yer post now, an' walk it in a milit'ry manner, keepin' constantly on the alert an' obserrvin' everything that takes place wit'in sight an' hearin'. If those lads come back do you put a bullet in the *teniente* an' open rapid fire on the others, an' we'll all come down an' give ye a hand."

I scurried before him as he limped out of the little mud fort, and slipped the reins over his pony's head.

"Give me a leg up, Soger," he commanded, so I bent, braced myself and cupped both hands.

Spud put his foot in my hand and I heaved him up, and he rode away through the long grass and low bushes to visit an outpost of the First North Dakota Volunteers. And I jogged back to the main guard.

It was many years later before it occurred to me that I had been in action; that in the first unofficial battle of a war that started the next night I had helped capture a fort and rout a superior force of the enemy.

The last time I saw Spud was when he stood back of McNally, his aged top sergeant, while McNally read to F Company the order for Spud's retirement. It was a heart-breaking scene when Spud went down the line to shake the hands of F Company and wish them farewell—forever. Can old soldiers weep? Yes, they can, for I saw them. Discipline went to hell that night, while the old soldiers hugged the lost leader. Spud parted with McNally last. They had been through many a stormy passage in the Civil War. The War Department would permit McNally to go while he could stand the campaign, but under the law darling old Spud's soldier days were over. And he and McNally would not, in all likelihood, meet again.

They embraced and clung together and wept unashamed. Although he was not my company commander, I wept, too, for Spud was bigger than a company, bigger than a regiment. He was the Spirit Incarnate of the old forgotten Eighth Army Corps. And I have always entertained a high pride that once I was of his company of the valiant, even though I was scared to death!

The Cowboy's Bed

By CARL ELMO FREEMAN

THE cowboy sometimes refers to his bed as his hot roll, his home, crumb incubator, or flea trap. And it consists, always, of a piece of heavy, eighteen to twenty ounce canvas, usually seven feet wide and sixteen to eighteen feet long; at one end, down about half its length, there are snaps on one side and rings on the other.

This piece of canvas, or tarp, is spread out flat on the ground, full length. The end with the snaps and rings is the ground cloth, and on it the cowboy makes his bed.

First he lays a light mattress of the single variety—about thirty inches wide—on the tarp about six inches from the snap end. In the absence of a mattress he folds one or more comforters, which he may call sugans, hen-skins, or pelts, to use as a pad. Then come his blankets folded lengthwise so he will have as much under him as over him.

His pillow may be a regular goose-hair, duck-down or hen-hair affair with a white, black or red slip, or none at all. Or it may be a meal sack containing his other shirt, socks, go-to-meetin' suit, a pair of shoes, a bridle bit, shaving outfit, letters from home or her, his six-shooter, a box of cartridges, supply of makin's, a bundle of buckskin saddle strings, a deck of cards, a box of carbolic salve, a bottle of horse liniment, an almanac, a magazine, a bottle of ink and a bill-of-sale for his private horses. Any or all of these things are in that sack which the cowboy calls his war-bag.

Now with all his bedding in place, he folds the sides up and snaps them together over top. Then he brings the other end of the tarp up over all, with two or three feet extending out over and beyond the head of his bed, and tucks both sides under. Beneath the end extending out over the head of his bed is his dressing chamber. Here he can undress à la Pullman berth if it is raining. Here he leaves his clothing, boots, rope, chaps, saddle and "riggin'" protected from the weather.

If it is real cold he uses his coat, usually a sheep lined, heavy duck affair, as a foot warmer—places it in the foot of his bed to slip his feet into. Thus curled in his cocoon he can weather blizzards, water spouts and cyclones. He may sleep with his head covered up in bad weather, but he arranges his tarp in a fold so he will have a breathing hole. In case it snows during the night and this vent is plugged, his breath will condense on the tarp above, drop down in his face and wake him up.

The only thing a cowboy need fear in his tarp bed is low ground that overflows, a tree blowing down on him or rocks under his bed. He avoids all these chances and a hillside. If he builds his bed on slanting ground he will work downhill, out of bed, before morning.

Sleeping under the wagon is bad business. Freighters used to do it, and such freighters can be identified by scars on their heads where they snagged their scalps on the running gear.

Bed tents are used on some of the Northern ranges. These are of the pyramid type, about seven by seven feet in size, with jointed poles on the outside and a heavy canvas floor sewed in. But the Arizona and New Mexico waddies claim they are more trouble to set up than they are worth.

About once a week and following rainy spells, the cowboy spreads his bedding out on the grass and bushes to air and sun. The blankets spread out in the sun on a Winter day will retain the solar heat far into the night.

The PARIAH

By BILL ADAMS

IT WAS dawn, and the *Inveresk* was towing to sea, when first I saw him. Neither the mate nor I had seen the crew come aboard on the preceding evening. Dawn was giving us our first sight of them.

"There's a man for you, eh?" said the mate.

I was second mate, and it was my first voyage as an officer. So long as the men of the crew do their work an officer doesn't pay much attention to them, especially a young officer. It was a day or two before I began to pay any particular attention to him, and after that it was some time before I found out anything about him.

His name was Baker. He was of about my own age. I can see him now, just as I first saw him on that chill morning when we were towing from the muddy Mersey. He stood well over six feet. He was lean in the hips, but very broad shouldered. His chest was magnificent. He had big blue eyes, thick, curly, flaxen hair, and a wide, high forehead. Until I heard his name I supposed that he was a Scandinavian, a Dutchman, or a German.

I had the usual contempt for foreigners. In those days Liverpool ships were full of them. It was rare to find an ordinary or an able seaman who was a Britisher. Britishers would not go to sea in sailing ships at that time. Owners did not want them, for if there were any it meant that there would in all probability be trouble over the food. Foreigners throve on fare so coarse and meager that no British sailor would stand for it. To have even one in a forecastle spelled trouble.

While by far the most powerfully built man in the crew, he was conspicuous quite apart from his appearance. It was not only his English name that made him so. The others had such names as Yensen, Cannasaro, Muller, and so forth, and came on deck jabbering in foreign lingos. He came on deck voiceless, and remained so, a speechless seeming man. Except for an old fellow named Runchel the others were a scummy lot from Baltic and Mediterranean ports—a drink sodden gang. He was not their type at all. Self-respect was written all over him. There seemed to be a sensitiveness about him too; a sort of self-consciousness, mingled with an air of tremendous reserve. He put me in mind of a proud, shy man wearing a suit of new and ill fitting clothes.

"Poor beggar," the mate said. "A well bred dog among a lot of curs! Small wonder he's not comfortable, eh?"

We had been at sea but a few days when I noticed that Baker liked to be among the apprentices; liked to work

near them when on duty, and to hang about their quarters when below. That seemed natural enough. But an odd thing was that he held no talk with them, never started a conversation. If one spoke to him his reply was invariably monosyllabic. He seemed merely to like to hear *them* talk; and to all they said he paid careful attention—as if, youngsters though they were, there were things to be learned from them. There were a half dozen of them, all of them from good English homes, lads who spoke with cultivated voices and apart from the ordinary devilments of their kind showed a natural refinement.

When among the foremast hands Baker scarcely ever spoke either. Except for associating with old Runchel a good deal, he kept to himself. He liked to sit with Runchel in the dog watch, but it was Runchel who did all the talking. He was a garrulous old fellow from some little inland German town. Marburg, I think it was. He'd talk to Baker about Marburg, or wherever it was, all through the dog watch, and Baker would listen just as if it were some little English country town of which the old man spoke.

"Yes," I heard him say one evening, "my home is like that too. Just like that."

There seemed to be deep longing in his voice. There was something else in his voice, too; something that I was no more than very dimly conscious of and that never in the least awakened my suspicions.

When Baker did speak he spoke slowly, and always in a quiet voice. To judge by the manner in which he enunciated them you would have thought that words were precious things that could be easily broken. Or you might perhaps have thought that he was a fellow who had been born dumb and had but lately found speech.

Baker was a rattling good sailor. It was always he who was first to obey an order, always he who was first man aloft. He was full of eagerness, a sort of shy eagerness. Apart from Runchel, who was too old for any speed, there was no man aboard to compare with him. To have such a man in the crew made me despise the foreigners all the more. I very soon took to favoring him, of course; and, giving him the pleasanter jobs, let the others do all the common dirty work.

"He's such a square, honest chap," I said to the mate, "that he don't like to be favored." For I sensed that to be picked for the nice, easy work went against the grain with him.

"A damned fine man," the mate said.

I must tell you about the mate. His name was Garrod. He was a big man with a harsh manner and an ill tempered voice. He must have weighed at least ten, perhaps even twenty, pounds more than Baker. They were of the same height and of much the same build; but there was no spare flesh, not an ounce of fat, on Baker.

Garrod loathed all foreigners, and Germans he loathed most of all. He would not even have Runchel in his watch, fine seaman though the old man was.

"You can have that old German," he told me. "I don't want to bullyrag an old devil like him."

A bullyragger. A bully. That's what Garrod was. And he didn't make any bones about it.

"Run, you scum!" he'd shout, and the dago, or frog, or whoever it was, would run.

"Lay your weight on that rope, you foreign swine!" he'd bellow; and with his big fists and big feet he kept his watch forever on the jump.

FOR three weeks after sailing we had continual fresh weather, with squally winds and high seas. On the third Sunday it moderated and the sun came out. A fine day for a sailor's pleasure.

During the forenoon watch I went forward. Men and apprentices were having their sailors' pleasures in the forecastle and half-deck. But Baker was having his out on the hatch by himself. He had brought his sea chest out to the hatch, had tidied its contents and was almost done. Tidying up the contents of one's sea chest, setting everything neatly in its place, was what was known as a sailor's pleasure in those days. A proper seaman could easily spend an hour or two at it.

Baker's clothes were laid neatly away. Tacked under the lid of his sea chest was a brown canvas in which were a number of pockets with flaps buttoning over them. One for razor, shaving soap and brush. One for his housewife with its cotton and thread, needles, buttons and so forth. And a large one that held writing paper, envelops and old letters.

I chanced to notice that several old letters that Baker was putting away as I came up bore German stamps. He had not heard my approach, for I was barefoot. I was beside him ere he was aware of me. When he saw me a look of embarrassment came to his face. He hurriedly put away the last letter. It was unstamped, and addressed to some place in Germany. I didn't see the name. The first letter was M. He shut down the lid of his chest and turned to me."

"It's a beautiful day, sir," he said in his usual slow accents.

"Baker, where do you come from?" I asked.

I couldn't have said just what made me ask him that, for I was utterly unsuspecting.

"London, sir," he replied.

When a man tells you that he comes from London he doesn't tell you very much. London covers so great an area. He might be from Brixton, Streatham, Dulwich, or any one of a vast number of suburbs.

"What part of London?" I inquired.

He went red as a beet and made no answer.

"What the devil's the matter?" I asked. "You don't look like a fellow who's committed any sort of crime and had to skip." It was common enough to find jailbirds or wanted men in the forecastles in those days.

"I thought you were from some little inland town," I continued. "I'm from Herne Hill myself. Were you ever there?"

"No, sir," he replied.

"Well, I don't give a damn where you're from or what you've done," I said, and turned to go.

I hadn't taken a couple of steps when he was beside me. There was no one on deck but the two of us.

"My name's not really Baker, sir," he said in an embarrassed voice.

"You don't have to own up to me about anything," said I. "It's all the same to me where you come from or what you've done."

Something of a look of relief came to his face at that.

"I'd like to tell you about it, sir," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Chuck it off your chest if that's how you feel about it," I answered.

"My name's Gustav Haussman, sir," said he. "I'm a German."

And he brought out one of the stamped letters and showed it to me, addressed to that name.

You could have bowled me over with a feather, I was so taken aback. I realized now what it had been that had seemed vaguely peculiar in his voice. Maybe you'd think it queer that I hadn't caught on to his very slight foreign accent before, but there you are! Sailing ship men were a mighty cosmopolitan lot in those days. From knocking about the world as they did, they came to be pretty much mixed up in their lingos.

Take a young Englishman who'd been in American ports a good deal. He'd come back to his own country using "guess," and "reckon," and "sidewalk" and so on; and calling his girl "honey." And he'd be quite apt to be taken for an American.

I had no particular antipathy for Germans. When first I went to sea it used to make my blood boil to see the red ensign flying above a ship in which, apart from officers and apprentices, there would not be a solitary Britisher. The sight of some foreigner hoisting or lowering that flag enraged me for a time. But I had grown used to things.

"All right, Haussman," said I.

He looked nervously round.

"All right, Baker," said I. "It's all right. No one heard me. Baker it is then."

"Thank you, sir," said he, very shy and apologetic. "I'd like to explain, sir."

And then he told me all about it. He had been at sea for seven or eight years, in Liverpool ships all the time. In the first instance he had joined a Liverpool

ship in Hamburg, as ordinary seaman. Before her death his mother had kept some sort of little hotel or boarding house for tourists, so that he had already picked up a fair knowledge of English and was not unused to English ways. All those north European peoples are quick at picking up our lingo, although, even in years, they don't often get rid of their foreign accent so well as Baker had when I first met him.

It didn't take him long to get the hang of things aboard ship, and by the end of a passage he could understand all orders and he knew the names of all the gear. His first ship went to Liverpool at the end of her voyage and he stayed with her for a second. On that second voyage she chanced to have an all British crew, and he had every opportunity to better his knowledge of English.

He left his first ship in Antwerp and signed on in another Liverpool vessel; and that time he changed his name and, instead of signing on as an able seaman, as he might have done, went to sea as an ordinary again; so as to begin at the beginning and, having thrown away all his discharges under his real name, start with all his papers under the assumed name—and pass for a Britisher.

I caught on to the why of things without Baker's having to tell me. A great many Germans came to sea in our ships for the purpose of escaping their military service. Sooner or later their vessels would go to some German port and they would be picked up, and not only be made to serve, but quite often would be given a hard term of imprisonment. Sometimes a German would be lucky enough to stay in vessels that never went to Germany, but it was always a gamble.

It was only by changing his whole name and successfully passing as a Britisher that a German could be safe; and for one of them to do the latter was rare when once the authorities in his own country got on his trail. Let one of those renegade Germans venture to go to his native land even when he was past military age, and the chances were that he would be arrested and thrown into jail. It was a case of once out, out for always.

I COULD not help feeling a degree of contempt for Baker. Though the idea of compulsory service was just as repugnant to me as it was to all other Britishers in those days, I could not help but rather despise a man who would renounce his birthright to avoid it. He saw what was in my mind, and he looked mighty miserable. Seeing that, my contempt faded a little. At any rate he had a sense of guilt, I thought. He was not a barefaced renegade.

"All right, Baker," I said, and left him.

Presently the idea came to me that he was simply a coward. He had forsworn his birthright not owing to any moral dislike for military service, but because he lacked the manhood for soldiering.

Though a sailor seldom gave any thought to danger, life in sailing ships was about the most dangerous of all lives. Peril was never far away. For a man to take up sailoring as a means of escape from military service struck me as funny. I supposed that Baker had probably never realized just how much danger there was in the life. I knew that he had never rounded the Horn; that all his voyages had been round the Cape to India, or the East, or to Mediterranean ports, or the Brazils. On such voyages ships, as a general rule, had a very much easier time of it than did those in the Cape Horn trade, or on the run to and from Australia. If peril had at times been close to him, he had doubtless been unaware of it; for peril is very often known to none save the skipper and his mates.

I began to wonder how Baker would behave did we meet with emergency. We were going to be rounding the Horn in the dead of Winter, and we'd be fairly certain to encounter the usual devilish cold and heavy weather. I judged that he would prove a shivering craven. I began to look on him as a pariah, as an outcast. My former admiration died completely.

One evening we passed another ship. We hoisted the ensign. It was Baker who hoisted it. Revulsion came to me at sight of him with the flag in his hands.

This was desecration, that an alien coward such as he should touch it. I felt a hot desire to kick the fellow from the poop; but I controlled myself and said nothing.

About a week after my conversation with Baker I paused while on my way forward one evening and looked into the forecastle. Some of the hands lay in their bunks. Some were playing checkers and cards. Just within the door Baker sat bent over a navigation book.

"You're studying navigation, eh?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied.

He was planning on getting a British ticket and becoming an officer in our merchant marine. And in that there was nothing impossible. We were remarkably easy going in those now far off days. There were even plenty of acknowledged Germans who had pilots' licenses that enabled them to pilot vessels into our harbors. Our charts were wide open to them. They were permitted to know what should have been the secrets of our ports.

While, in common with my kind, I had always disapproved the freedom accorded foreigners, I had always been, just as had most others, apathetic about it. It was a matter for the higher-ups. Once in awhile you'd hear some fellow such as Garrod raising a big howl, but no real protest was ever made. So I did not become at all excited over Baker's plans.

I was mildly amused, and for a time had no more talk with him. But I no longer favored him, no longer picked him for the easy or the pleasant jobs about the deck and masts.

After awhile we ran into dirty weather, and had to take sail off in a hurry. The ship was a bad sea boat, a wet ship. As the wind increased she flooded her decks. Sea after sea roared in over the weather rail.

Some of the crew hung back, but not Baker. Showing no sign of any yellow streak, he stayed at the ropes when others let go and ran. I was somewhat surprised, but we were in warm latitudes as yet.

"Wait till we get farther south, and we'll soon see what he's made of," I thought.

The last day of the two-day blow was the worst. There was a devil of a sea running. All hands were hauling on the weather main brace when a grayback came thundering toward them. Seeing its threatening onrush, the mate jumped down from the poop, to be ready to fist any man who started to run. Unaware of him, one of the foremast hands let go the brace and turned to leap for safety.

"Back, you dog!" the mate bawled, and smashed the fellow in the mouth with his big fist.

I saw Baker's horrified face, and at once I realized why it was that he had always stayed at the ropes. No pluck had kept him there. It had been merely his dread of physical abuse.

"Poor cur," thought I, and thenceforth I took no pains to hide my contempt. Indeed, I had half a mind to tell the mate what I knew of him, but for some reason kept his secret to myself.

SEA and sky grew ever darker while we sailed on into the south. When we began to make ready for the Horn, putting preventer sheets on the upper topsails, and weather boards round the taffrail, I watched Baker closely. He had become more silent then and, never realizing that his manner was attributable to my now evident contempt, I set it down to fear.

A little to the north of the Falklands we ran into another blow. The mate having put fear into them, the hands behaved better. Things went well enough.

Toward the end of the blow something jammed aloft while we were hoisting the main upper topsail. I was close to the halyards, and jumped into the rigging to go up to see what was wrong. Having cleared a piece of roband that had caught in the gin block, I came down.

There was a spare spar lashed under the bulwarks along the weather side. At the moment that I dropped from the rigging, meaning to step on it and from it to the deck, the ship took a heavy roll. I lost my footing. My legs slipped down between the spar and the bul-

warks. My body sprawled over the spar. I tried to rise, and could not. One of my knees was sprained. It hurt horribly.

For three days I stayed in my cabin, while the skipper kept my watch. On the third evening, my leg still rather lame, I returned to the deck.

Running before a hard following wind and a high sea, the ship was logging about twelve miles an hour. The skipper was carrying all sail that he dared and, to my thinking, he was carrying a good deal too much. When I went up to the poop he went below and left her to me. Because she was a hard ship to steer when running there were two hands at the wheel. One was Baker.

Presently I noticed a gasket working loose on the foremast. Instead of blowing my whistle to get a man out, I went down to the main deck and started forward, intending to call one of the hands and send him aloft. Dusk was beginning to set in, and there was a deal of water on the deck.

Favoring my lame leg as much as possible, I started forward slowly, holding fast to the rigging, with water now to my knees and now to my middle. At the main rigging I paused to wait for a lull in her rolling. When she steadied a little I ran for the fore rigging. There was no one on deck. None but the men at the wheel could see me. I was still but halfway when she took a wild roll. A cataract of white water raged inboard. My knee hurt horribly while I tried to keep a foothold on the slippery planks. And then in a moment I was down and being swept across the deck, clawing vainly for a handhold. Another cataract crashed aboard. Her lee rail dipped deep to the sea. I was washed over it bodily.

I was overboard!

I was never a good swimmer. Even had I been one, I could have done but little good with my knee as bad as, if not worse than, ever.

There may be men who can face death such as faced me with equanimity. I knew sheer terror. Awful fear gripped me. I tried to shout, and only gasped. Spray blinded and choked me. I was conscious of the ship's hull rushing by, of canvas bellied high above. Then, swept in under her counter, I had a glimpse of her rudder; and she was gone. A sea rolled over me. Everything was dark.

When I rose to the surface in that cold, wind-lashed dusk it was to see two calm blue eyes looking into my face amid the lathered sea crests.

"It's all right, sir." I heard, "Don't struggle, and I'll get you to the buoy. I threw one over."

Holding desperately to the buoy, I floated easily. It didn't occur to me to tell Baker to hold to it too. He swam close to me, his gaze, like mine, upon the distant ship.

I had slight hope, for dusk was deepening fast; and to stop a ship running in a high sea is perilous even in full day. I as good as knew that the skipper would not stop her. Blinded by spray, I lost sight of her. And then, when hope was dead in me, I heard Baker's voice again.

"They've stopped her, sir, I didn't think they would." His voice was utterly nonchalant, as if there had never been any cause for fearing!

The mate hauled me into the boat and reached for my rescuer. But Baker swung himself easily from the water, unaided.

"Thank God we'd one Britisher in the crew!" exclaimed the mate. And as he said that I saw Baker's face. I shall always see it.

The long immersion in cold water did more for my knee than anything had done. It was soon all right again. A few days after I had been washed overboard the mate came to me one evening. He had just been forward.

"That man Baker's studying navigation," he told me. "He's in the forecastle bent over a book."

"I hope he gets his ticket, sir," said I, and meant it fully.

"By gad, yes!" said the mate. "He's too good a Britisher to have to live in a forecastle with a lot of foreign scum."

THE bell struck and I went on duty. Off duty now, the mate went forward. When in a minute or two he came aft Baker followed him. He took Baker to his cabin, and throughout the second dog watch helped him with his naviga-

tion. I wondered how Baker was feeling in the little cabin, with a man who he knew detested Germans as one detests rattlesnakes. Of one thing I was sure. He would have little to say.

When the mate came up to the poop at eight bells he said to me:

"Baker's from Herne Hill. Isn't that where you're from?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"By gad, he's the quietest fellow I ever saw!" said the mate. "Lord, how he does listen!"

That night I asked Baker why he had told the mate that he came from Herne Hill.

"It's the only part of London that I could think of, sir," he answered. "When I told him I was from London he wanted to know from what part."

"You've had a pretty close call," said I. "You'll have to know something more about the place you're from, or the cat'll be out." And I told him a lot about Herne Hill. "If he asks any questions, say you live on Holmdene Avenue," I said, and I told him all about Holmdene Avenue, and about the near neighborhood; Dulwich, and Lover's Lane, and the old theater of varieties at Camberwell where Herne Hill people often went.

We were close to the Horn when the mate said to me:

"See here, you've got the best watch by a long shot. I'm going to shift Baker and take him in mine."

For Baker's sake more than my own, I tried to dissuade Garrod, tried to talk him into taking some other man. It was no use.

"If he's in my watch he'll be off duty when I am," he said. "I'll be able to give him plenty of time with his navigation."

So Baker was shifted to Garrod's watch, and that evening spent two hours in Garrod's cabin. He came to me that night. He was worried. But he was not worried over the thing that was worrying me, over the likelihood of his secret coming out.

"I don't feel right," he told me. "It makes me feel bad to deceive him, sir. I don't feel I ought to take his help."

"Don't be a fool. If it came out now, he'd have it in for me as badly as he would have it in for you," I told him, and that settled it.

After only a few days of gales we came round the Horn without any mishap. More afraid of the mate than of the weather, the crew stood to their work in very fair shape. But we were no sooner round the Horn than Runchel had to lay up. There was nothing but age the matter with him. He was too old to be going to sea in sail. He was worn out. He grew weaker and weaker each day. The skipper had him taken out of the forecastle and put in a bunk in a spare locker beneath the forecastle head; and he ordered that one of the hands be always with him.

I looked in on Runchel one night. A Finn was sitting with him. They were talking in broken English, for the Finn knew no German and Runchel no Finnish. The old man looked up at me piteously.

"*Ach,* sir," he moaned, "if only vos vun man vot my langwitch speaks."

The mate came up at that moment.

"The old devil's dying," he said, and, as we started aft together, he looked into the forecastle.

"Isn't there one of you swabs that can speak any German?" he asked.

Baker looked up from his book and caught my eye. I frowned, warning him to say nothing. But he shut the book and rose.

"I can, sir," he replied.

"Go sit with Runchel awhile," said the mate; and turning to me, he added, "Come on. Let's go see this."

Baker took the Finn's place by Runchel's pillow. The old man's eyes were closed. His skinny hands were crossed upon his chest. It was plain that the end was not far off.

Baker went down, set his lips to the old man's ear and whispered something. Runchel's eyes opened wide. A look of ineffable bliss came to his face. Then, as he realized that he had not been dreaming, he stretched out a withered arm and grasped Baker's hand.

With Runchel's pallid hand clasped in his strong fingers, Baker sat erect and looked up at the mate and me. There was no shyness in his face now. His blue eyes were moist, and in a moment the words of a German song came from

his lips. It was like a lullaby.

The song died. A shudder ran through old Runchel. It passed, and a smile came to his features. Baker laid his cold hand down and rose and faced us.

"By gad, Baker!" exclaimed the mate. "How did a Britisher ever come to use their lingo as you can use it?"

"I'm German, sir," said Baker.

While the mate stared, incredulous, amazed, the skipper's whistle sounded from aft. He turned and hurried away.

Baker met my gaze calmly.

"I couldn't lie, sir. Not here," he said.

Leaving the sons of the Fatherland together, I hastened after the mate.

"Now what happens?" I thought.

The skipper was gone below when I came to the poop. Garrod was alone.

"What the devil d'ye make of it?" he asked.

The bell struck as he spoke, and ere its tones had died away Baker appeared, on his way to the wheel. Garrod looked at him amazedly as he passed.

"Am I crazy, or is he?" he asked me.

I TOLD the mate everything. There was nothing else for me to do. For a time he was speechless. But presently he spoke, relentlessly:

"You can have him back in your watch," he said. "It's you that's under an obligation to him, not me. I can't stomach a German at any price."

So Baker was returned to my watch, and as the days passed the mate ignored him.

Coming on deck one morning, I saw the sails of a ship low on the horizon astern. While Garrod and I watched her it became evident that she was gaining on us. The wind was fresh, and both ships were under topgallant sails, with their royals furled.

"Get all hands out," ordered Garrod. "That fellow isn't going to catch us if I can help it."

When all sheets and halyards had been sweated up I rejoined the mate.

"She's still coming up on us," he growled.

A couple of hours passed, and the other ship was almost up with us. She was just too far away for us to be able to make out her name.

The wind came harder, in a quick puff; and, lying far down, the ship raced, with her lee rail level with the sea. For a time neither vessel gained or lost. It looked as though we might yet hold our own. But soon we saw a man hurrying up the other ship's main rigging, on his way to loose the royal.

"If she sets her royal she'll have her mast ripped out of her." Garrod grinned. "We'll run away from her then."

With her main royal set the other ship at once began to come up on us again.

"If she can stand it, so can we," said Garrod.

He ordered that our own main royal be set. When it was ready for hoisting he ran down to the main deck.

"Pull, you scum! Pull!" he bellowed.

"Good! That's good! Make fast!" shouted the mate when the sail was at its masthead; and as he spoke a big sea came aboard, half drowning his voice.

Baker was pulling forehand, farthest from the mate. Of all the men, he alone did not hear the order. While the others ceased pulling, he reached up and put every ounce of his great strength upon the halyards for a long strong pull.

The overstrained tie parted. The royal yard dropped, snapped in two, and hung down over the topgallantsail below it. One of its jagged ends tore a long rent in that sail. Almost instantly the other ship was up with us. I caught a glimpse of her name.

While, too furious for speech, the mate glowered at Baker, the other ship's colors ran to her peak. The German flag whipped mockingly upon the wind. Faintly there came to us a German cheer.

If an officer strikes a man first the man may strike back and be within the law. But Baker made no attempt to defend himself as Garrod lashed out.

I laid a hand on Garrod's arm. He swung on me savagely.

"You and your damned German pet!" he sneered.

"If we don't get that wreckage cleared the mast's liable to come down, sir," I said, and that sobered him.

"Get the damned wreckage cleared," he ordered, and left me to it. Long ere I was done the other ship was out of sight ahead.

Baker's face was bruised. His lips were cut and swollen. An eye was closed.

More than ever now I was puzzled about Baker. I set him down as utterly lacking in decent personal pride. For a time he remained an enigma to me. Then, despite myself, the word pariah came to my mind— I put it away. Cur he was not—and yet, if a man has no pride, surely somewhere in his make-up—somewhere must be—I tried to put the thought away, refused to let myself think that there was a yellow streak in him. So I ended by setting him down as a foreigner; as one fundamentally different and lacking the fine qualities of my own breed. Though he had risked his life for mine, there was something lacking in him.

"Why in hell didn't the two of you drown?" sneered Garrod when I joined him on the poop again. "What the devil did the skipper put a boat out after you for?"

Until we came to Valparaiso ten days later my life was mighty unpleasant.

It was dusk when we dropped anchor. The bumboatmen came off with green things and fruit. And when morning came Baker was gone. One of the crew gave me a note from him.

"Thank you for all you've done for me, sir," I read.

No more. And I knew that it was as much for my sake as for his own that he had deserted.

TWENTY years passed. I was master of a steamer trading up and down the East African coast, and between it and India.

It was while I was in Port Natal that news of war came; and it was a few days later, on the morning of the day on which I was to go to sea, that news of enemy raiders in the Indian Ocean reached me.

On a hot, still dawn when I was about halfway to Colombo a German cruiser appeared. I turned and tried to run, but it was useless. Following the cruiser was a fast British passenger steamer, a captured vessel the decks of which were crowded with people. Ordered to abandon my ship and go aboard the liner, there was nothing for me to do but obey. Before our boats were alongside her, my vessel was at the bottom.

We were no sooner aboard the liner than an order came from the cruiser bidding her master to take his ship anywhere he pleased. She was full to capacity with the crews of other sunken vessels. Her first officer met me at her gangway when, last of my company, I stepped to her deck.

"There's just one cabin left, sir," he told me. "The skipper's. You'll have it to yourself. He hasn't used it for days. He sends his compliments and asks you to make yourself at home."

"Well, I suppose I'd better go and report to him," said I when I had set my few belongings in the cabin of the liner's master.

"No need, sir," replied the First. "I'm in charge of everything. He has his worries, of course, and is living in the chartroom when not on the bridge. I'll take you along and introduce you to the masters of the other sunken ships."

He led me to a smoking room that had been set apart for the use of my fellows in misfortune. As we approached it I heard a sneering voice say:

"There'll be no more damned Germans taking ships into our harbors now. We'll kick 'em out, root and branch."

The liner's first officer took me into the smoking room.

"Another member for your little club, gentlemen—Captain Jowitt," said he, introducing me.

"Here you are, Captain!" said the owner of the sneering voice, and passed me a whisky. "A short shrift to every damned German! How does that toast suit you?"

I hadn't thought of Garrod in years. Now I seemed face to face with him again, for the owner of the sneering voice was just such another. Instantly I saw Baker's calm eyes looking into my face amid the foamy sea crests.

"I don't know about every German being damned, sir," said I. "Maybe there are exceptions."

"By gad, you don't happen to be one

yourself, do you?" he asked.

"Easy, Captain Davids! That's getting a bit thick," interposed one of the other skippers.

"No offense intended," snapped Davids. "I can't understand a man sticking up for a German, that's all."

"Well, here's to a quick war and a clean finish," said I, raising my glass.

"A clean finish is right. We'll soon see it is a clean finish," exclaimed Davids.

"Who's master of this ship?" I asked.

"A damned lucky man," replied Davids. "His ship and mine were the first the cruiser caught. I had a slow boat, but a very valuable cargo, so he sunk me and kept this packet."

"What's our skipper's name?" I inquired.

"Baker," said Davids. "And he's a damned poor mixer. Hasn't so much as come down from his bridge to get acquainted. I've hardly had a glimpse of him."

After dark I made my way toward the bridge. A quartermaster met me at the foot of the ladder.

"No admittance to the bridge, sir."

I wrote a brief note and asked him to hand it to his skipper. He was back in a moment.

"Captain Baker's in the chartroom, sir."

I entered the chartroom and shut the door behind me.

If the intervening years had changed me, they had changed him far more. His face was deeply lined. There was much gray at his temples. But he was lean and lithe, his great strength plainly evident. For a few moments neither of us spoke. We gazed silently at each other. When at last he spoke, his tones were weary.

"When I saw you come aboard I hoped you would not remember me."

"Why so?" I asked him.

"It might have made things easier for you," he replied. Then, in tones both eager and doubting, he asked, "You trust me?"

"You're a noncombatant. You never were the fighting kind anyway," said I. "Besides, you saved my life once, didn't you?"

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. When presently he looked up it was to say:

"You're sure you trust me?"

I gripped his hand and left him.

WE CAME to Aden, and there the passengers and crews of the sunken ships, together with all stewards and cooks save such few as were needed to look after the liner's company and us four skippers, were transferred to slower vessels. The liner's doctor, and two doctors from sunken vessels, left us to go to a large troopship. In a couple of hours we were at sea again, in company with two other fast liners that stayed with us all through the Red Sea; one steaming a short distance ahead, the other astern.

It was at Suez that we first heard of enemy atrocities. With the exception of Davids, we captains were loath to believe. Davids swallowed everything whole.

On leaving Aden I turned out of Baker's cabin. But he still lived in his chartroom and, having his meals taken to him there, never came down.

A day or two after leaving Suez Captains Randolph, McKenzi and I were on the deck together. Davids was alone in the smoking room, sipping whisky and muttering to himself. On the bridge above us Baker was pacing to and fro, his head bowed and his hands clasped behind his back. The day was fine and clear and, save for a French destroyer that was convoying us through the Mediterranean, there was nothing in sight.

"Captain Baker," called McKenzi, "won't you come down and join us for awhile?"

Baker paused and glanced down.

"Come on, sir," urged Randolph.

Leaving his first officer in charge on the bridge, Baker slowly descended the ladder.

"What do you make of this talk of enemy atrocities, sir?" asked Randolph.

"I take it with a grain of salt," replied Baker.

"You think it a pack of lies, eh, sir?" asked McKenzi.

"I didn't exactly say that," came the hesitant reply.

"What's a pack of lies?" demanded a belligerent voice, and Davids strode up.

"We were speaking of the reported atrocities," said Randolph.

"Are you trying to whitewash the damned Germans?" demanded Davids, scowling at Baker.

Called by his first officer, Baker hurried back to his bridge, leaving the question unanswered. The destroyer was circling us, flying a signal. Davids went back to his whisky, and in a few moments the first officer came down and told us that enemy submarines had been reported in the Mediterranean.

At Gibraltar we heard that enemy warships had shelled our northeast coast, killing noncombatants. There was news of further atrocities in Belgium, too. Randolph and McKenzi became almost as filled with hate as Davids, and I could no longer disbelieve. That day we no longer chatted of other things. It was of war, and of nothing but war, that we talked.

Shortly after leaving Gibraltar the four of us were sitting in the smoking room when the first officer passed by the door. Davids called to him. He stopped and looked in.

"Sure you haven't any Germans in your crew, sir?" asked Davids.

The First replied with a curt negative and passed on.

"Some people are too confoundedly cocky," grumbled Davids. "We can't be too careful these days. I'd like mighty well to look the crew over."

ON THE second evening out from Gibraltar, Randolph, McKenzi and I were sitting in the smoking room. For once we were not speaking of the war. Randolph was talking of his days as an apprentice in sailing ships.

"What a lot of Germans we used to have in our ships in those days," he was saying, when Davids came in.

"I'd like to catch a German in one of our ships now," growled Davids, and sat down.

For a time there was silence. Then, impelled by I know not what, I began to talk. And I told them of my voyage in the *Inveresk*, told them the story of Baker and of how he had saved my life, but mentioned no names save that of the ship.

When I was done Davids muttered a contemptuous oath.

"What was that fellow's name?" he asked.

"Haussman," said I. "Gustav Haussman. " I rose and went to my cabin to turn in.

It was close to midnight. In a few minutes, at midnight, the quartermaster on duty at the foot of the bridge ladder would go below. No one was on duty there from midnight till six in the morning. The liner's second officer was in charge on the bridge. A light in the chartroom told me that Baker was still up.

Turning as I entered my cabin, I saw Davids come from the smoking room. To reach his cabin he must either pass my door or go the long way round by the other side of the deck. Lest he come my way and stop to pester me with his unending brag and hate, I closed my door. For a few moments there was silence. Then I heard the voices of Randolph and McKenzi and, looking from my port, saw them leaning on the rail across the deck from my cabin. Davids had not gone by. I opened my door again.

Randolph saw me, and came to ask for a light for his pipe.

"Davids turned in?" I asked.

"I'm getting a bit tired of Davids," said Randolph. "No, he hasn't turned in. Just after you left he got hold of the quartermaster and sent a note up to the skipper, asking to see him on imperative business. The skipper couldn't very well refuse, I suppose, and he's gone to the bridge."

"What was the imperative business?" I queried, suddenly uneasy at the thought of Davids on the bridge.

"The damned fool!" exclaimed Randolph. "Your yarn about that fellow, Haussman, has set him to fussing again. He's gone up to ask the skipper to muster all hands first thing in the morning and to go over every one's papers."

Too worried to turn in till I knew that Davids was down from the bridge, I stepped out to the deck.

"Let's take a bit of a stroll before we roll in," suggested McKenzi.

We walked forward together. When we came by the foot of the bridge ladder we heard Davids's voice. His words reached us plainly. The third officer had just come down and gone aft on some errand. Baker and Davids were alone. We could see their forms, dim in the gloom above us.

"By gad, you never can tell these days!" we heard Davids say.

"Quite unnecessary, sir," we heard Baker reply. And then we saw him leave Davids and go toward his chartroom. Davids followed.

Baker opened the chartroom door, and the light shone out.

"It's your plain duty," we heard Davids say. We could see him distinctly now, and could see Baker too, just within the chartroom door.

Again we heard Baker's patient voice.

"Quite needless, Captain Davids, I assure you."

My hand on the bridge ladder rail, one foot on the bottom step, I looked up at them.

"Go bring the damned fool down," suggested McKenzi in a low voice, as Davids started to argue again.

Davids's back was to me. He seemed about to come away. And then, while I stood hesitant, close to the top of the ladder now, Baker saw me.

"You're fooling yourself!" exclaimed Davids in sneering tones. "Jowitt's been telling us about a fellow called Haussman."

I was at the head of the ladder now, and Baker was gazing into my face.

Randolph's voice came from below me, his tones impatient and angry.

"Fetch him down! He's been there far too long!"

I shall ever hear Baker's voice, as, with a hand to his brow, he cried in tones of anguish:

"My God, my God!"

Cold at my heart, I stepped to the bridge. With a look on his face that I shall never forget, Baker was gazing at me. He spoke again now.

"You have told them of the *Inveresk!*" he cried.

There was an amazed cry from Randolph. Then he and McKenzi ran up the ladder. For a long moment Davids looked from Baker to me, and back from me to him. Then:

"Ah!" he cried. "*That's* where the wind lies, eh?" Scowling at me, he snarled, "You rotten German lover! You knew it all the time!"

"Easy there, Davids!" interposed Randolph. "We must remember that he once saved Jowitt's life."

Bending from the ladder head, Davids called to the first officer in his cabin just below. The First came hurrying, pajama clad, up the ladder.

"Your game's up, Haussman! You might have fooled us but for Jowitt here!" Davids sneered.

The First looked wonderingly at his commander. Baker sat down and buried his face in his hands. Randolph and McKenzi drew the First a little away. While in low voices they explained things to him, Davids leered contemptuously at Baker and at me.

"Captain Davids, will you please remain on the bridge and take charge?" asked the First presently; then, turning to Baker, he said, "I must lock you up, sir."

White faced and voiceless, Baker followed the First down the ladder. Randolph and McKenzi followed. I followed them.

A short distance along the promenade deck the First opened a cabin and switched on the light. Baker entered the cabin. Without a word, the First stepped out to the deck and locked the door. Gesturing us to follow, he went silently to his own cabin. We followed, but just outside his door I stopped.

"Come in, Captain Jowitt," he said.

I shook my head.

"They can tell you, sir," said I, nodding to Randolph and McKenzi. "They know the whole story." For I could not bring myself to discuss Baker.

I left them and went to the smoking room, but, in a few moments, too distraught to stay still, returned to the deck. The voices reached me plainly.

"I suppose he's been waiting for an opportunity to pile her up," said the First. "Without the destroyers to convoy us it would have been easy for him to have wrecked her before this."

"Destroyers or not, he'd have manmanaged to run her ashore before long," said Randolph.

"No question about that," agreed McKenzi.

"We'll keep it to ourselves," said the First. "There's no need for any one but you four skippers and myself to know about it. It's a good thing the quartermaster was gone off duty, a good thing the Third wasn't on the bridge. In the closed wheelhouse, the man at the wheel heard nothing, of course. The ship's company can be allowed to think that their skipper has been taken ill."

I WENT to my cabin and sat there, wide awake till morning in darkness, my light turned out. Desperately I tried to make up my mind about Baker. It was impossible. At one minute I was sure that he was entirely to be trusted. At the next, my mind poisoned by war propaganda, I found myself doubting.

Morning came with a light breeze and a misty sea. Now and then we had glimpses of the two destroyers that had convoyed us since Gibraltar. As the forenoon drew on the wind freshened. By midday there was a strong breeze and a high sea. It was rarely that we caught sight of the destroyers now. All day I kept to myself, avoiding Davids and the others.

Toward nightfall the wind grew stronger, and the weather thicker.

Shortly after dark one of the destroyers came close and signaled that they were leaving us. There was little use in their staying with us in such weather, little danger that any submarine would find us.

Before the first watch was half over the wind was at full gale force and a nasty sea was running. The ship rolled abominably, often going so far over that water lapped on to her high promenade deck. Her fore and after well decks were continually filled with white water.

At four bells of the eight-to-twelve watch the first officer sent for Randolph, McKenzi and me to come to his cabin. He was acting as skipper now, and at his request Davids had taken the bridge at eight o'clock. He made a proposal with which we readily fell in. I agreed to take the bridge at midnight and to stand the second officer's watch regularly till we reached port. At four in the morning Randolph and McKenzi would relieve me, and thereafter would take the First's watch. Thus there would be always one certificated master in charge of the ship; and during the watch from four to eight of the morning, the watch in which more accidents happen than at any other time, there would be two. With the matter settled, I went to the deck, leaving Randolph and McKenzi with the First in his cabin at the foot of the bridge ladder.

For a time I sat in the smoking room, thinking of Baker. Again and again I tried to convince myself that he was innocent. But I could not feel sure. His anguish might have been cleverly assumed. Could it have been but a pose? Must the man who once saved my life meet the doom of a spy? I knew, as all men knew, that spies were everywhere.

Presently I left the smoking room and walked toward the cabin in which Baker was imprisoned. A few steps brought me to his open port. He was sitting on the settee, his arms folded, his gaze on the locked door; his expression was completely stony, unreadable as that of the sphinx.

"The face of a spy," thought I, and turned away. From a position a little farther forward than his cabin, I looked out into the gloomy night.

A huge swell swung under the ship. She lifted high, hung for a moment on the summit of a great water ridge, and took such a terrific roll, her motion so sudden, so alarmingly jerky, that it seemed that she must be going to roll clear over.

At the moment that the ship reached the downward limit of her roll a blinding flare illumined the deck and the stormy sea beside her. A deafening explosion sent me staggering. Something struck me violently on my side, and for a few moments I lay half stunned.

Coming to my senses, I saw planks splintered and uplifted all about me. Above me, fragments of a lifeboat swung from a twisted davit. The promenade deck cabins nearby were stove in, their bulkheads smashed and buckled, their doors either shattered or flung wide open. Some distance down the deck a solitary light yet shone. The light in the

First's cabin was still burning.

With a breath-taking pain in my side I climbed to my feet and, making my way as best I could over the wreckage, hastened to the First's cabin. Passing the door of the cabin adjoining it, I saw the second officer prone on the deck without.

The First lay face up on the deck of his cabin. Over him lay Randolph. McKenzi lay huddled and motionless in a corner.

"Where's Captain Davids?" I asked as the Third came stumblingly down the bridge ladder.

"He's badly hurt, sir," replied the Third, and fell fainting at my feet.

There was a step behind me. Baker had come to the deck. For one brief instant I saw him gazing at those prostrate forms. Then, as the light in the First's cabin dimmed and went almost out, the chief engineer came running from below.

"How is she below, Chief?" asked Baker, his tones the calm accents of a commander ever ready for emergency.

No hint of anguish now. No least suggestion that there had been previous trouble of any sort.

"No damage below water line, sir," replied the engineer. "She rolled her high side down on to a mine. The explosion was all upward."

"Very good. You may go then, sir," said Baker.

We were left then, Baker and I, face to face in the gloom. The pain in my side was unbearable now, and I clung, weak and voiceless, to the doorway. While he peered at me the thought came to me that there was no one to stay him now if he were traitor. Of all her navigators, he alone was unharmed. A groan that I could not suppress escaped me.

And then two strong hands were upon, two strong arms about, me. He lifted me bodily, and I heard him gasp as he did so. Staggering as if my weight were too much for him, he bore me away.

He laid me in a bunk and wedged me there against the ship's hard rolling, wedging me with pillows and blankets.

My senses reeled. But I could hear sailors passing my door, carrying the dead and wounded.

THAT night passed somehow. Part of the time I was unconscious. Part of the time I lay helplessly listening to the roar of the wind and sea.

When morning came a steward brought me food. The First was dead, he told me. Randolph was dead. McKenzi was unconscious. The Second and Third were severely wounded. Davids was unconscious in the cabin next to mine. Captain Baker had not left the bridge all night. I listened in a sort of stupor, asking no question.

At noon the steward came again. Davids and McKenzi were unconscious still. Captain Baker had not left the bridge at all. And when he came to me again at evening things were still the same.

"The captain's not hurt, Steward?" I asked, that evening.

"No, sir," the steward replied. "He's just a-standin' holdin' to the bridge rail hour after hour, sir. He was sick when she rolled herself aginst yon mine, ye mind, sir. He's likely a bit sick yet, sir, an' needin' sleep o' course. But he ain't hurt none. I asked him, sir. Just acts like he was feelin' dizzy-like, an' won't eat nothin'. Just takes the cawfee from me an' orders me away."

The wind eased with evening, and the rolling grew less. But fog hung dense, hiding all things. Dark fell, and hour by hour I wondered what Baker was at. And by and by I dozed away.

I wakened with a start. Some one was speaking nearby. I recognized Baker's voice. He was in Davids's cabin. Dawn was breaking, and the sea was smooth. But fog hid all things still; fog so dense I could not see the rail across the deck from my open door.

"Ah," I heard, "now I am even." And then, next instant, Baker stood there. Pallid as a ghost, he looked at me from eyes that were utterly expressionless. He stayed a moment only, then was gone, swaying uncertainly from, I supposed, great weariness.

Where, I wondered, would he pile the ship ashore?

The steward came.

"Send the chief engineer to me at once," I said.

I must tell the engineer of Baker. The

ship could yet be saved.

But as the steward turned to go I saw two calm eyes looking into my face from foamy sea crests. I heard a calm voice say, "They've stopped her, sir. I didn't think they would."

I called the steward back.

"Never mind the engineer," said I.

And then I heard Davids cry out, deliriously—

"Are you sure you've got no Germans in your crew?"

And I heard the steward quieting him:

"Don't go a-frettin' about no spies, sir. There's none but good Britishers in this here ship."

And, all torn and tortured with doubt, I called the steward back. But when he came, instead of asking him to send the engineer to me, as I had meant to do, I could only say—

"Bring me a drink of cold water when you can, please, Steward."

Day dragged on. We must be past Ushant now. He might easily have wrecked the ship upon that rock fanged coast. Where was he taking her? How was he going to be even with us all? The ship might have been in mid-ocean, so alone was she in that dense fog. And suddenly I realized that the foghorn was silent! That was part of his game, then! He wanted no friendly scouting war vessel to discover him by it. It never occurred to me that he would be keeping it silent lest an enemy hear.

At some time in the next night, early or late I could not have said, I climbed from my bunk. Though every motion was torture, I must somehow get to the bridge. I must find out what Baker was doing.

Dawn was gray when I came to my senses, prone on the splintered deck by the foot of the bridge ladder. There was no rolling or pitching now. The sea was smooth. The fog seemed to give promise of dispersing.

I saw Baker above me, his hands clutching the bridge rail, his feet braced, as if the ship were still rolling. Slowly, my broken ribs torturing me, I crept up the ladder.

I laid a hand upon his arm. His features drawn and deathly white, he turned on me.

"What—" I began. "Where—"

He brought his whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast. Two sailors came running.

"Take Captain Jowitt to his cabin," he ordered.

I struggled feebly in the sailors' arms. Trying to find words, I stammered incoherently. They had me at the head of the ladder, were about to descend, when I saw Baker totter and almost fall. I knew then that he was too weary to carry on any longer. I had but to explain, and the ship would be saved.

"Wait!" I cried. "Wait!" and I gripped the ladder rail. They laid me down then, to let me rest a moment ere taking a better hold on me.

I saw Baker totter to the engine room telegraph and lay his hand upon it. I heard its loud jangle, and the quick jangling reply from the engine room. The engines stilled. And then I heard Baker cry aloud—

"Let go!" It seemed as if there were a note of triumph in his voice.

The anchor rattled down.

Mystified utterly, I climbed to my feet, unnoticed by the two sailors who were now gazing over the waters ahead.

Wind wafted, the fog blew clear; and, bright in the morning's light, I saw before me the well known shores of the Solent.

The ship was in!

And now I saw Baker slump down to the deck. The sailors saw him too, and hastened toward him. But it was I who came to him first, my pains forgotten.

He tried to rise, sat up, and fell again. With my arms about him, he lay with his head upon my knees.

"You see—you were—mistaken," murmured Baker, and looked smilingly up to me. A tremor ran through him, and he was still.

They came to me later, where I lay in my cabin with Davids still raving of spies in his cabin nearby, and told me that Captain Baker was dead.

"He was injured internally," the doctor from shore told me. "God alone knows how he managed to live so long. Such wounds as his would have killed most men long before this. He was a brave man."

"I never expect to see a braver, Doctor," I answered.

A15

By WILLIAM MacLEOD RAINE

Conclusion of

The BROAD ARROW

The Story Thus Far:

HIDING the disgrace into which he had fallen behind the name of John Haxon, Geoffrey Blake was deported for life to the convict camps of Australia on the prison ship *Success*. Geoffrey had stood in the way of his cousin, Captain Henry Killough, to the fortune of old Sir Eustace Blake—and Victoria Day. Geoffrey could not speak at his trial for fear of compromising Victoria, who had been with him in his rooms at the time of the murder. Which Captain Killough had known when he swore he had seen Geoffrey running from the house of Mullin, the dead man.

Months later Victoria visited the *Success* in Sydney harbor with her friend, Mary McQueen. By chance she saw the man she had betrayed being dragged from the whipping frame. She fainted. Killough was in charge of the prisoners. Despite his frantic assurances to the contrary, Mary McQueen knew the prisoner to be Geoffrey Blake, and believed him innocent. To prevent Victoria, whom he had bullied into a promise of marriage, seeing her lover again, he had Geoffrey sent to the convict camp of Major McQuirk.

After weeks of grueling labor, Blake managed his escape into the bush with two companions; and the three quickly made themselves famous as the Haxon gang of bushrangers.

One day, after a daring raid on the bank at Parametta, Geoffrey rescued a man staked out in the bush to die by the barbarous outlaw, Jack Lynch. The fellow, who gave his name as Jones, appeared greatly frightened by Blake, who questioned him. Finally Jones broke down and confessed that he had been a witness at Blake's trial; that Killough, the real murderer of Mullin —who had been blackmailing him because of discovered thefts from his uncle, Sir Eustace— had forced Jones by threats of violence into perjury. Geoffrey lost no time in taking Jones before Jim Stuart, a friendly magistrate, who recorded the confession.

A few weeks later Blake got wind of a projected raid on the station of Mary McQueen's father by Lynch's gang. Quickly rallying his men, Geoffrey rode for the distant ranch, only to find himself too late. McQueen and Jim Stuart had been shot, and Victoria Day was missing—kidnaped by the outlaw. Geoffrey clapped spurs to his horse and plunged into the bush once more.

Victoria gave up all hope of rescue as Lynch and one of his men named Redruth carried her farther and farther into the bush. During a short rest, when she fell asleep, Lynch wakened her. He was pointing a revolver at her heart.

"Don't make a sound, or I'll shoot!"

She made no sound. Instead, she swooned.

WHEN consciousness returned she found herself in the saddle once more. They were dropping down into the valley again, retracing their way to the river. The dry bed they struck and crossed farther up. Through dense scrub they came at last to a mallee park, where the snow-white bark of the small trees, crowned by a foliage of vivid green, bright and shiny as a copper kettle, would have refreshed an eye less weary than that of Victoria.

After more interminable miles they came at last to a dry wash and followed its bed. This led, surprisingly, through a break in a rock wall to a gully that

soon became a gulch with high barrier cliffs.

All the time the sun blazed down on them.

The fugitives came at last to the lip of a park. Into this they descended and drew up at an old camping ground on the edge of which were three wurleys—native huts.

Lynch tossed Victoria to the ground. He pointed to one of the wurleys.

"Get in there," he ordered. "I'll see you later."

The lax muscles of her legs could scarcely support the weight of the girl. She crept into the wurley and dropped upon a pile of dirty blankets.

Her dry throat ached. She expected every minute to see his shadow darken the doorway. That God meant her to pay in horrible suffering and degradation for the wrong she had done Geoffrey she was now sure. For He had let her friends pass within a hundred yards of the spot where she had lain hidden without letting them know of her presence. She belonged to this terrible man. She was his gin, and after he was through with her. . .

She dared not think of that. She dared not think at all.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WIRRA TAKES THE TRAIL

BLAKE pulled up, dismounted and joined Robbins in an inspection of hoofprints in the sand.

"I'm not satisfied," he said presently. "Three horses at least have been this way. Maybe more. Afraid we're following a false scent."

"Lynch may have picked up a mount for the lady," Burke suggested.

Halliday swung from the saddle and examined the tracks.

"They don't look fresh enough—some of 'em. But what can we do? There's always a chance we're right, and he must be heading this way."

"Unless he fooled us at the river. I'm going back. The rest of you stay with this trail."

The eyes of Robbins met those of his chief.

"You think maybe he cut across to—to one of the places where he holes up?"

"Yes." Blake did not intend to be more explicit in the presence of Tom Halliday. "Unless he picked up food and fresh mounts on the way he would have to stop for them. Anyhow, I'm going to find out."

"Let me go with you," Tarcoola Jack said. "We'd be two to two then."

"No need," Blake said carelessly. "I'll go alone."

"Where do we meet again?" Burke asked.

"At the place we always do."

"Wish you'd take some one," Robbins urged. "Lynch will get you if he can."

Blake shook his head.

"No. Good hunting."

With which wish he turned the head of his horse and began the long ride back to the river. From there he intended to go bush to Blind Man's Gap. He and Robbins had reasoned, when they came on fresh tracks at the river leading into the wilderness, that Lynch had not dared cut across to the Gap for fear the other bushrangers had betrayed his hiding place. To do so would be to lose five or six hours, and by that time his pursuers might close the mouth of the Gap. Blake now suspected that the hunted men had led their trailers to follow a wild goose chase while they slipped into Blind Man's Gap to outfit themselves again. If they had done this, he credited Redruth with the shrewdness to plan and execute the maneuver.

It was late afternoon when Blake reached the mouth of the Gap. There was a risk in riding up the gulch, but it was one that had to be taken. His foes could pick him off with a carbine from one of the rock walls, but he felt the chances were they had no time to lie in wait for pursuers.

By the time he had reached the park he was so confident Lynch had come and gone that he rode straight to the old camp of his enemy. On the way he passed two horses, both of them travel stained and plainly exhausted. There were signs the riders had been here. He found a woman's handkerchief, made of the finest linen, in one of the wurleys.

Geoffrey Blake remounted and rode to his own camp. While still some distance away he gave the cooey signal and

was answered. Wirra came running to meet him. The native caught hold of the stirrup and ran beside his master to the camp.

From where he sat in front of one of the cabins Ned Trevor asked a question.

"What luck, Captain?"

"We got caught in a willie-willie* and were held up twelve hours. Got there almost too late. Lynch was running wild. He shot two squatters and carried a girl off with him when we drove his gang away."

"A white girl?" asked Trevor.

"A society girl from Sydney. Friend of the governor and all that sort of thing."

"My word! He'll get scragged for that, if for nothing else. Have they got the girl yet?"

"No. He was here with her not more than two or three hours since—at his camp in the Gap. By the way, I had to kill Hawkes. One of the gang was made prisoner. There are only he and Redruth left."

"We saw them," Trevor said.

"When?"

"About three hours ago. Wirra heard 'em coming. That black can hear a whisper two miles away. So I crawled up to the rock point with a carbine and was ready. They wanted to take one of our horses."

"Did they get it?"

"They did not. I had the drop on them. Stopped them on the narrow trail. They couldn't do a thing about it. I was under cover and they weren't. Lynch begged and cursed a lot, but that didn't help him any. He said you told him he could have a horse, but he couldn't gammon me. I'd heard you tell him he couldn't have one."

"And he had to go back without it. Good fellow, Trevor."

"Gib it damper, *poonarie?*" the black asked.

"Knock something together in about two shakes of a kangaroo's tail, Wirra. And tea—gallons of tea. I'm taking you with me, boy, to track Lynch."

The black grinned from one ear to another as he hurriedly prepared food. He was happy when he was following a man-trail. The blood-lust of the old tribal wars still stirred in him at times and when the desire was on him he longed to drive a spear through the body of a foe or to crack a skull with a nullah-nullah.†

Blake caught and saddled a fresh horse, ate hurriedly, filled a tucker-bag with food and a billy-can with water, and started down the trail with Wirra trotting beside him. They went out of the park and down the gully. The bushman seemed tireless, but after they had left the Gap the pace slackened, though it was amazing how fast the black boy picked up the trail.

He went in front of the horseman, his nose apparently sniffing the scent as a dog does, all the time quivering with excitement. They traveled at a fairly fast walk. If he used the sense of smell to help him, Blake did not see how he did it. For like all the aborigines of the Australian bush he carried on his person a strong, offensive odor peculiar to his race, one so penetrating that it was unreasonable to expect his nostrils to distinguish anything less rank. But however he did it, whatever senses he brought into play, the native bushman was the best tracker the world has ever seen. The Indian of the American West did not class with him in this respect, though of a far higher order of intelligence.

Darkness stopped the two pursuers for a time, but as soon as the stars came out Wirra took up the trail again. He descended into lagoons, climbed stony ridges, and passed through thick wattle. Two or three times he was at fault for a few moments, but presently he was off again. The black boy led the way through a stunted ti-tree swamp and up a ridge of she-oaks.

Abruptly he stopped.

"Smellum blood," he announced.

In the dewless Austral night Blake sniffed the air. It seemed to him just as usual, but he had had too much experience of the sensitiveness of Wirra's flattened nostrils to scoff.

"Near?" he asked.

"On top hill. White man him dead."

Even to Blake, used though he was to

*The local name for a terrific wind and dust storm.

†A nullah-nullah is a stick eighteen inches or two feet long with an elongated head hardened by fire. The natives were very expert at throwing this weapon.

the almost magical powers of the black, this was a little thick.

"A blighter with a big black beard?" he asked sceptically.

The sarcasm passed over Wirra's head. He contributed further information.

"Him alone now."

It turned out to be as the native had said. They found a man lying face down under a gum tree. In the back of his head was a bullet hole. There was a second in the small of his back. Blake turned the body over and looked down into the bearded face.

Blake knew almost as well as though he had seen it what had occurred. There were three riders and two horses. This man had been killed treacherously by his companion because the pursuit was pressing close. The villain who had done it needed the victim's mount.

That was an easy guess. Blake could go farther and make a prophecy. If he did not work fast there might come another hour when he would look down upon the dead body of Victoria Day. For the man with her would have to travel far and fast.

CHAPTER XXIX

LYNCH SETTLES AN ARGUMENT

LYNCH had come into the wurley, a rope in his hands. He swung the end of it around Victoria's legs as she was rising hurriedly to her feet. Redruth followed his chief into the hut. They had been quarreling about the girl. She had heard them, since they had taken no trouble to lower their voices. Redruth wanted to leave her in the park. They had only two fresh horses, and she would hamper them in their flight.

"We've got to show 'em fast heels, boss, or we're done," Redruth urged. "I don't want to hang around till we're nabbed."

"It'll be as I say," Lynch snarled at him. "We'll get a bramby at Haxon's camp."

"And lose an hour, with the traps right on our heels. I don't like it," the other outlaw protested.

"Do I care what you like, you white livered dingo," Lynch stormed. "I don't know why I ever tied up with you, but since I did you'll take orders." He turned angrily to Victoria. "Come here."

She moved, trembling, toward him.

He bound her, hand and foot, then fastened her to a post. After that she saw nothing of them for nearly an hour.

They returned, still quarreling. She gathered from what they said that some one had prevented them from getting the horse they wanted. Redruth was still urging that it would be suicide to take the girl with them, and Lynch was obstinately telling him to mind his own business.

"Three of us can't travel on two horses," Redruth insisted.

The callous cruelty of his companion's answer filled her with fear.

"There won't be three of us long."

He laughed as he said it, and there was something about that laughter more horrible than the words.

Lynch untied Victoria and threw her out of the cabin. He swung to a saddle and pulled her up behind him. They started down the gulch.

It was plain to Victoria that a bad feeling existed between the men. They could not speak to each other without snarling. After getting out of the Gap they disagreed as to the best way to go to their objective. Redruth gave way sulkily, as he usually did, but this did not increase the good will of either. Both of them fell into a silence which lasted for hours. It was long after dark when Lynch pulled up and said they would have tucker.

"Build a fire," he ordered the other bushranger.

"And let some black tracker smell the smoke," Redruth objected.

"There's not a soul within twenty miles of us," the big man jeered. "If there is one it's some poor devil of a sundowner humping his swag. I stopped here because there's a shallow well over there in the gully."

"Where?"

Lynch jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

"Back of the hill. We'd better water the brambies."

Before they started Lynch lashed his captive to a gum tree. He followed Red-

ruth to the brow of the hill. From where Victoria stood she could not see either man after they had gone a few yards.

She heard a shot—a second one, and after the echoes had died away the sound of horrible, raucous laughter. The heart died in her bosom.

Some one came striding back, boots swishing the brush as he walked. Victoria knew, beyond any shadow of doubt, who was coming toward her and what he was leaving on the hilltop.

Lynch broke off his terrible laughter to voice his triumph.

"I told the fool there wouldn't be three of us long. He thought I meant it was you I'd get rid of, the blighter! Well, maybe I will, but not yet. Up you get, sweetheart, on to his saddle. I know where there is a soak—a shallow well—but it's not here. We've got four or five miles to go before you can bury that soft white face on your lover's neck."

He strode with her to the horses and lifted her into the saddle of the man whom he had killed. She clung to the pommel in front of her.

As they rode, a drum of fear beat in her breast. Hour by hour they were going deeper into the bush. She was lost. Stars were in the sky, millions of them; but, if she looked up, it was with no expectation of help. God and man had forsaken her.

At last the outlaw stopped and swung stiffly from the saddle. Catching the bridle of her horse, he reached up to pull Victoria down.

"Yours obediently, miss," he said.

His evil smile shook the remnants of her courage. She went into a panic as he buried her face in his rough beard, and out of her terror a wild cry rose.

Amazingly, out of the bush, there came an answer, a shout clear and resonant.

The bushranger thrust her at arms' length and listened. He stood crouched, his teeth bared like tusks. Something was crashing through the brush toward him. From the darkness a horseman came, by his side a running shadow lank as a skeleton. In that weird half light they looked ghostly rather than solidly real.

Lynch had dragged out his revolver at the first alarm. He fired, again and again. No bullets stopped these avengers charging forward. A fear of the supernatural flung panic into him. They were the spirits of men whom he had murdered.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BUSH TRACKER

EVER since he had turned bushranger, Geoffrey Blake had listened to wonderful stories about the sixth sense possessed by some of the aborigines through which they detected the presence of people at a considerable distance.

Geoffrey Blake did not know whether this strange divination of events occurring miles distant had any relation to sight or smell. It was not prophecy, for Wirra knew only of things which had already taken place. Whatever it was, the power had been born of generations of life in the bush.

Now Wirra followed in the starlit night a track of which his master could see not the slightest sign. After a time he stopped.

"Him go Wallaby sink."

"How far?" Blake asked.

"Two-three mile."

This was a guess, based on the direction the hunted man was taking. But the bushranger did not question its correctness. They need no longer follow the spoor of their prey but could push through the bush at top speed. Blake knew haste was essential if he was to save Victoria. Every minute counted now. For no doubt her captor thought he was safe in the bush and need not move on until morning.

Wirra ran beside the horse, one hand on the stirrup, the other clutching his nullah-nullah. His spear he had reluctantly left at home as too cumbersome to carry, not because he had wanted to do so but because his master had insisted upon it.

Except when they had to swing around brush or circle swampy spots Wirra followed a bee-line for the sink. Middle aged though he was, the thin, wiry legs of the black carried him over the ground about as fast as the horse

was able to travel in the difficult scrub. Once Blake gave him a toe and let the guide swing up behind, but after about a mile of this Wirra grew restless and squirmed to get down.

"Catchum sink soon," he explained.

Blake stopped and let him wriggle from the back of the horse.

They went through a mallee grove, the vivid green leaves shining in the starlight. Beyond this was a stretch of gum forest which dipped down toward the sink.

They were on the farther edge of this when the breeze carried to them the fear-filled scream of a woman. Blake instantly shouted an answer and dashed forward.

He heard the spit of a bullet whipping past his ear. Below him, not twenty yards away, he caught sight of Lynch, a huge figure standing crouched in the moonlight, a revolver in his hand. From the man's weapon a second and a third shot flamed.

Blake flung himself from the horse and was carried forward by the momentum of his flying start. He had no time to steady himself to shoot. Even before his feet struck the ground he had decided to risk a charge into the gun of his enemy.

He ran low, staggering his rush with zigzag plunges, to offer the poorest possible target. Then he reached his foe.

Raising his arm, he wiped the murderer on the temple with the barrel of his revolver. The big wideawake hat protected Lynch from being knocked cold. Blindly he reached out and seized his assailant.

In the tall, coarse grass they struggled to and fro while Wirra dodged about trying to get a chance to launch his nullah-nullah. Blake had no opportunity to use his weapon. His whole attention was concentrated upon protecting himself against the strength of this gorilla of a man. For the moment his revolver was a hindrance rather than a help, since it prevented him from grappling the other with his right arm and hand.

Lynch tried to crush his ribs. In drawing back from him Blake's foot caught in a mesh of tangled grass. The two went down locked together, the big man on top. Before he could get set, even before Wirra could launch his flying weapon, Blake drew up his legs and ripped his sharp spurs down the thighs of his foe. It was as though he had stuck a knife a quarter of an inch into the flesh of the killer and drawn it down.

With a yell of pain Lynch freed himself and leaped to his feet. Twice Blake rolled over, then was up in a bound. He had lost his first revolver in the struggle, but he cared nothing for that. This man was delivered into his hands. He was sure of it.

The murderer was trying to drag out a second pistol. Blake beat him to the draw, but he did not get a chance to fire. Something whizzed by him and struck Lynch on the forehead. The big ruffian threw up his hands and went down with a crash. Wirra's nullah-nullah had got home at last.

The black went past Blake like a streak of light, the blade of a knife shining in his hand.

"No, you don't," his master cried.

Blake reached the black just before he struck, dragged him back and tossed him aside as though he had been a child. The bushranger stooped and removed the revolver from the hand of the unconscious man. He made sure the fellow had no other weapons.

"Bring that rope," he ordered, with a nod toward the saddle of his prisoner.

"Maybe more better catchum dead," Wirra pleaded.

"Do as I say, boy, if you don't want the rope's end yourself," Blake ordered. "I'd rather have this fellow alive than dead."

Wirra regretfully brought the rope.

"Me plenty soon make him dead," he urged, and made a gesture to indicate cutting a throat.

Blake tied his prisoner securely. Not till he had finished doing this did he look at the girl. He had been aware of her as his horse had dashed across the glade and had immediately forgotten her existence.

Now he walked across to where she stood with her back to a tree. She was very pale. Her eyes were sunken and ringed with shadows. The skirt she wore had been torn to ribbons. Her

face and hands were dirty. She had been wretchedly unhappy and desperately hopeless, and she was exhausted almost to the point of prostration. Yet in spite of everything she was lovely. Suffering had refined her beauty, and in the soft, silvery light of night it had almost a spiritual quality. A breath of wind had caught her dress and modeled it against her slender limbs. Pathetically child-like, her fear filled eyes still held the ghost of terror.

He spoke, very gently—

"It's all right now, Vicky."

She held out her hands, took a wavering step or two forward, and went into his arms as though she belonged there.

The years were for a moment wiped out. He forgot the judge and his black cap, the treadmill and the lash, forgot he was a hunted man with a price on his head. The girl he had loved with such passionate ardor was in his arms, more exquisitely desirable because woe and pain had melted the seductive grace to utter weakness.

CHAPTER XXXI

GHOSTS OF THE PAST

BLAKE looked up at the far stars and thought how strangely one's life could become twisted by fate. This dramatic meeting in the bush with the woman who had once so quickened his emotions brought back vividly to him the existence which now seemed to belong to another incarnation. That gay, wild youth was dead. The Geoffrey Blake who had been bludgeoned by the hammer strokes of ill fortune would never again be that carefree boy. Buoyantly he had ridden the top waves. Since those days he had been buffeted by heavy seas.

The night was chill, but soon it would be day and the hot sun would flood the earth with heat. Occasionally he could hear the rustle of the hobbled horses moving through the brush or the sound of Lynch's curses from the spot where he was pegged out between two gum trees. Otherwise the immense silence of the bush enveloped them.

He had sent Wirra to follow Tom Halliday's party with the news that Victoria had been rescued, and it had been a relief to get rid of the black boy. For it had been plain that Wirra was obsessed by an almost irresistible impulse to crack the skull of the prisoner with his nullah-nullah. Lynch was safe enough. His captor did not need any help to take care of him or to get him back to the McQueen station, and it was worth a good deal to sidetrack the responsibility of watching two men instead of one.

Blake heard the padding of soft feet. He sat up abruptly, to see Victoria standing quietly beside him, slim and tall in the dim light. He saw she was shivering.

"I'm afraid, Geoff. I keep thinking he's crawling up to me. And then I want to scream. If I fall asleep I think—"

"He's down in the hollow tied hard and fast. I went to make sure only five minutes ago. You don't ever need to be afraid of him again."

"And I'm cold." Her voice quavered. "I want to be with you. Then I won't be afraid—and wretched."

She sank down beside him, gave a sigh of content, and dropped off to sleep.

For him sleep was more difficult, tired though he was. She stirred restlessly if the fingers of the arm beneath her head did not hold her close. Even though her deep breathing told him she had dropped into slumber, she had to be sure he was taking care of her.

Had she been, after all, so much to blame? The resistless urge of youth had driven them together, and the cruelty of fate had snatched them apart. Was it her fault that she was what she was, that there had not been iron enough in her to face the world and save him? The judgment of the world would condemn him rather than her. They had both been victims of Fate, she as much as he.

Then the blow had fallen. Of course it was not fair to have expected her to expose herself to the scorn of the conventional world in which she lived. That would have demanded great force of character, which was just the thing she did not have. She would have been an outcast, driven from the only world she knew by the whipping tongues of

malice. Only a brave woman would have dared that, such a woman as Mary McQueen.

With the lifting of darkness he gently disengaged his stiff arm from the sleeping girl and wrapped the blankets close about her body. She shrugged her shoulders into the warmth of the blueys without awakening.

Blake walked down into the hollow to check up on the prisoner. He tightened the knots where Lynch had been straining at them.

The murderer cursed him furiously for a traitor.

"What did you expect?" Blake asked coldly. "You went around this colony murdering men and putting the blame on me. Was it your idea that I'd sit quiet until they came to hang me for it? If so, the more fool you. You're going to Sydney to be scragged. I'd see to that, even though I had to take you there myself."

"I've got gold hidden. Turn me loose and I'll take you to it," the captive promised.

Blake smiled bitterly.

"I wouldn't turn you loose for a cool million sterling, Lynch. You've come to the end of your dirty crooked mile. Make up your mind to that."

"Only yesterday I could have killed you when you passed us at the rock slide, and I didn't do it," the bound outlaw whined.

"Afraid to bring the rest of my party on you," Blake told him. "Well, you'll do no more killing. It's Gallows Hill for you, Lynch and a dashed good riddance, I say."

Blake made damper and tea. He noticed that Victoria had wakened and departed. He was setting out the tucker when she came back. Apparently she had been down to the soak, for her face and hands were clean.

Geoffrey carried to the prisoner a pannikin of tea, some cold goat meat and a huge slice of damper; Lynch accepted the food with an oath.

"We'll eat alone, since Mr. Lynch's table manners leave something to be desired," Blake told Victoria. "He's a little out of sorts this morning anyhow. Perhaps you heard him swear when I took him his rations."

THEY traveled easily, not trying to make time. It was not possible to reach McQueen's station that day, and Blake preferred not to tire Victoria too much. With the resilience of youth she was already beginning to shake off the effects of her terrible experience, though he knew it would be some time before she had entirely recovered. She needed rest, a change of atmosphere, the gayety of young people.

"You're taking both him and me back to prison," she broke out unexpectedly after a long silence. "I'm to be married to Henry Killough on Thursday."

"You'll never marry him, on Thursday or any other day," Blake answered.

Victoria looked at him, surprised. There was a finality in his voice she did not understand, but the color dyed her cheeks. Did he mean that he still loved her, that he would never let another man take her from him? She hoped he meant that, even though she knew she would never marry a bushranger. It was in her horoscope to want all men to love her, even though she had no desire to love them. But for her this man stood out from all the others in the world. The maddest, sweetest moments of her life had been spent with him. Already she again felt barriers falling. The old excitement was quickening in her. A warm glow seemed to be poured into her body, a sweet and delicious intoxication.

"It's all settled—the minister and everything, and invitations out," she said.

He had nothing to say about that but brushed it aside as though it were of no importance.

"I thought I'd let you go ahead and ruin your life. I thought it was what you deserved. But I can't let you marry a murderer. He killed Mullin."

Victoria was disappointed. She did not want altruism from him, but love.

"How do you know he did?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter how I know. It's enough that I do. Some day it will be brought home to him, and if he has a wife she will be disgraced."

"I thought you wanted me disgraced," she murmured.

"I did, but I don't any more. I'm not God. What right have I to judge you

because you let me down?"

The big green eyes gazed from soft shadows with appealing wistfulness.

"I couldn't help it, Geoff. What else could I do? You wouldn't have wanted me to be an outcast, would you? I suffered—terribly. I grew ill. Oh, Geoff, we were punished for what we did."

He smiled, grimly.

"Even I suffered a little."

"Please, Geoff," she pleaded. "I did suffer too. How could I help it, when I loved you so?"

"Not quite as much as you loved your social standing, though," he suggested.

"I couldn't do it. I tried to. Dear, I did. But I hadn't the courage. I was afraid. And I thought you wouldn't want me to speak. You were a man and I was only a girl. I waited for you to ask me, but you never did. And then—it was too late."

"So the story ended."

"I want you to forgive me if I did wrong, Geoff. I loved you, so dearly, all the time."

"But you loved Vicky Day more."

"You don't forgive me then. You still hate me because I didn't speak and ruin my life."

"No, I don't hate you now. I did, but I've been learning lately."

He did not tell her that it was from another woman he had been learning to forget the hatred that was embittering his life.

Victoria recurred to the thought that had been in her mind.

"It's easy enough to *say* you're not going to let me marry Henry Killough. How are you going to prevent it? You'd be arrested as soon as you came to Sydney. You couldn't *do* anything to stop it."

He felt that her words were really a challenge. She wanted him to stop the marriage if he could. If she had dared to draw back from it she would have done so, but the danger of scandal was too great. She knew Henry Killough too well to hope he would not blast her reputation.

"I don't have to go to Sydney to stop it. You have friends who will move if it is necessary."

"Who do you mean? That's silly. What could any of my friends do? They don't know anything about Henry that everybody doesn't know. If they did, they would have spoken before this."

"At the right time they will speak. We arranged it yesterday."

"*Who* arranged it? I don't know what you mean."

"You'll know when the time comes."

His words struck a little spark of indignation from her.

"I suppose I don't have to be told anything about it. None of my business probably, since I'm only the girl who is expecting to get married. You'll just settle it any way that suits you."

"I've told you all I can just now. All I'm saying is that if you marry Henry Killough it will be with evidence before you that he killed Mullin."

"But you haven't any sure evidence. You can't have. Where did you get it, away off here on the other side of the world?"

His gaze followed a flight of parrakeets, a gay streak of green, crimson and black.

"If it weren't so hot it would be a fine day," he said.

"That means you're not going to tell me."

He smiled.

"The bush is a bit monotonous, don't you think? I daresay you miss the green fields of Old England."

"I hate it here," she said with a flare of energy.

"When I read the newspapers about your dinners and dances at Sydney I get the impression you're having rather a good time. What's the use of being the belle of the city if you don't?"

Lynch rode in front of them. His feet were tied under the belly of the horse, so that he had no chance to escape. When they stopped to rest and eat during the middle of the day Blake watched him carefully every moment of the time. The man was desperate and would stop at nothing to get away.

At night Blake pegged him out a second time. It was a harsh way to treat the man, but there was nothing else his captor could do except sit up all night and guard him. If the positions of the two men had been reversed Blake knew this ruffian would have shot him down without hesitating an instant.

After darkness had fallen, Victoria brought the blanket close to where he sat.

"I'm still afraid," she said. "Do you mind if I sit near you while you smoke, Geoff?"

From the fire he picked a stick glowing at one end and with it lighted his pipe.

"Not at all," he said carelessly.

From her soft throat came a rueful, husky little laugh.

"Why of all the men in the world did it have to be you that rescued me, Geoff?" she murmured.

What she meant he clearly understood, but his reply stuck to the dusty road of the commonplace.

"I happened to be the handiest."

"Don't you think there's anything in destiny—that we were flung together alone this way because it was meant?" she asked in a low voice.

He puffed at his pipe sardonically.

"I remember when we thought something like that once before."

"I know, but—"

"We'll not be romantic about this. I'm an outlaw, young woman, worth just one thousand pounds to the first man who puts a bullet into my body. You're the toast of the colony. Let's stick to facts and forget fancies."

She was still nervous, afraid of the least sound that came out of the darkness. At any moment the ruffian who had been pegged out in the hollow might come stealing toward her. She felt safe only when she was with Geoffrey, so close that she could reach out and touch him.

One of the hobbled horses stepped on a dry stick and broke it. Victoria's hand flew out to that of her companion. His strong brown fist closed on her small white one and reassurance poured through her in a flood. In the darkness her lips turned slowly, reluctantly, to his. He found them sweet and warm and quivering with passion.

Geoffrey rose, abruptly. This would not do. He had been sent to rescue this girl by the woman he loved. To let the wild urge that had once ruined him again sweep them from their feet would be weak, foolish and disloyal.

"You'd better know it," he told her roughly. "There's another woman. It's a mad business, of course. Nothing can come of it. But she's the only woman in the world for me."

Victoria stood beside him, starry eyed and lovely. His words were a shock, but they were a challenge too. She had no conscience about other women's men.

"You loved me first," she claimed.

He did not answer that. Instead, he named the woman, turned and walked into the darkness.

Victoria repeated, as though she could not believe it—"Mary McQueen."

CHAPTER XXXII

NEWS FROM THE BUSH

SINCE the McQueen station had become in effect a hospital, Dr. Minturn decided to stay there until his patients were out of the woods. All three of them were doing well. The two more seriously wounded were bushmen. Life in the open under the healthy conditions of frontier existence had given them hardy constitutions. By the fourth day both of them were talking earnestly about food.

The third patient kept to his room for three days. At first he had been in much pain. When in bed he still had to lie on his face. Seventy-three hard with a horsewhip on the bare back would have shaken the fortitude of a gamer man than Henry Killough. The captain was unhappy both in mind and body. He felt disgraced, because of the flogging and the fact that he had not stood up well under it. To meet anybody's eyes gave him a sense of shame and impotent rage.

Here those whom he saw were sympathetic, at least in manner, but when he returned to Sydney it would be unbearable. One can not ride roughshod over the feelings of others without making enemies. There were scores of men and women who would gloat over the punishment that had overtaken him. He could never again ruffle it at the Royal Hotel with impunity or snub an annoying bore at the Café Parisien. The thing to do was to ask for a transfer to another regiment, and even if he returned to England the story would fol-

low him. That horsewhip had branded him for life.

Leaning on a shepherd's crook borrowed from Will McQueen, the captain limped up and down the porch. Mary joined him. She had seen him only twice since Hawkes had paid his score, and on each occasion for but a few moments. From the first she had never liked him, but he was their guest and he had suffered cruel indignity.

"Hope you are feeling better today, Captain," she said.

"What a country!" he burst out in weak fury. "Where ruffians can torture honest men and get away from these nincompoops who call themselves constables."

It was in Mary's mind that he had got only what he had given many another man, but she did not say so. Instead, she tried to comfort him.

"The one who did this outrage lies buried in the paddock," she said gently.

"I wish he weren't. I'd like to get a chance to cut his heart out with a whip," he retorted bitterly.

She changed the subject.

"I get so anxious for news about Vicky. If only this man Lynch had been shot too."

"Vicky ought to have stayed in the house," Killough said, "where there were men to defend her from this villain."

Mary looked at him with level eyes that judged the man mercilessly. She thought it callous of him to criticize Vicky's terror.

"The men there weren't able to do much for her, were they?" she asked. "I think she did right to run when she found a chance. It wasn't her fault the bushrangers picked her up later."

"I didn't say it was her fault," he said irritably.

A cloud of dust was moving down the road toward the house. Mary watched it anxiously. Out of it rode three men. She recognized them. They were constables. Three days ago they had left the station to take the trail after Lynch.

She ran down the steps to meet them. Sergeant Mountjoy swung stiffly from the saddle. Before Mary flung her question at him she knew the answer. His dejection was written on the man's face.

"No," he answered. "Didn't see hair or hide of him. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. What chance have we when all he has to do is to ride back into the bush and be swallowed up until he wants to come out again?"

"I don't think you constables are worth the powder to blow you up—any of you," Killough said petulantly.

Mountjoy looked the soldier over doggedly.

"Who are you?"

"This is Captain Killough, Sergeant," Mary explained hastily. "You must excuse him if he seems a little impatient. He was treated very roughly by Lynch's gang."

The sergeant had heard the story of the flogging and the reason for it.

"I can understand why he was, if he is always as pleasant as he is now," the trooper said bluntly.

"This fellow should have been laid by the heels months ago," Killough snapped.

It was Mary and not Killough who pushed home inquiries of the abducted girl.

"You didn't come across any trace of Miss Day at all? You didn't meet anybody who had seen her?"

"No," Mountjoy said again.

"Aren't you the same constable who let Haxon slip through your fingers months ago?" Killough asked insolently.

The policeman flushed angrily.

"The very same man. Aren't you the officer who was in a room with him thirty minutes two or three days after the bank robbery?"

Killough rapped with the ferrule of his staff on the floor.

"That's impudence, my man. By gad, I'll report it!" he shouted.

"Report and be hanged to you. And don't call me your man, Captain. I know all about your men. You keep their backs pickled for them, and now you know all about how that feels. Don't you?"

"You both ought to be ashamed," Mary reproved. "I'll not listen to such childish quarreling."

She turned and walked away from them. After a moment the constable followed her.

"You're right, Miss McQueen," he said, ashamed of himself. "I beg your pardon. Got my back up and lost my temper."

"Oh, that's all right," she said. "What chance has Haxon of finding Lynch and saving my friend, d'you think?" she asked.

"Are you sure he's trying to find him?" the trooper asked.

"Quite sure," she said firmly.

"After all, they're both bushrangers, miss. It wouldn't be reasonable to expect him to turn over another ruffian to be hanged. It would be like giving some one else a cue to betray him, wouldn't it?"

"Haxon isn't a ruffian. He's a gentleman. That's the difference. I don't say he'll bring Lynch back with him if he does find him, but I say he'll save Miss Day even if he has to kill Lynch."

Mountjoy shook his head.

"I never met one of these gentlemen outlaws. I've heard of 'em, but I don't believe in 'em. Scratch their skins and they're all wrong coves."

"He came here and saved the station, didn't he? He killed Hawkes and captured another of the gang. Why don't you give him credit for it?" Mary asked indignantly.

The grin of the sergeant was rueful. "I daresay I'm not fair to him, miss. I owe that fellow a grudge. He made a fool of me."

"That was his dodge to get away. You don't blame him for that, do you?"

"I don't blame him, but I'd give a five-pound note to get the darbies on him just the same."

"I hope you never will," she told him frankly.

"I'll never rest till I do," the constable told her doggedly.

Inside of the hour he had his wish.

CHAPTER XXXIII

KILLOUGH FINDS A WAY OUT

A CONSTABLE rode in to McQueen's station with mail for Sergeant Mountjoy. He had been sent, a special messenger, direct from headquarters at Sydney. With him he had also a letter from England, addressed to Geoffrey Blake, Esq., care of James Stuart.

Mary offered to give this letter to Stuart. She looked at the envelop with a strange emotion. That bit of folded paper, of finest linen texture, with the dozen words written in an angular, individual script, was a symbol of vast import to her. It meant a renewal of contact with the old life that had been so abruptly discontinued years ago. She guessed it was from old Sir Eustace. Into the chirography she read something crabbed and imperious.

She glanced at Mountjoy and was surprised at the intentness with which he devoured that official letter. From the look on his face she judged that it had brought him a surprise.

He stopped, in the middle of his reading, to ask her a question.

"Where is Captain Killough?"

Some sharpness in the voice warned her of an impending crisis.

"He's on the porch," she said. "Do you want to quarrel with him again, Sergeant?"

"Never again," he said in a peculiar tone.

He and his men were eating dinner, and Mary had been seeing that the maid was giving them plenty of food. Mountjoy shifted his place so that he could look out of the window and command a view of the porch. The girl wondered why he did that.

The door of the dining room opened and Tom Halliday walked into the room. He was dusty and haggard, but he was smiling.

"Vicky?" Mary cried.

"He saved her. He's bringing her home."

"Who?" asked the sergeant.

"Haxon. He got a black boy and ran Lynch down. They're on their way back to the station now."

"How do you know?" demanded Mountjoy.

"The black boy tracked us down and brought word from Haxon."

"You know only what Haxon says then?"

"That's enough for me," Halliday replied promptly. He flung a question at Mary. "How are Jim and your father?"

"Fine. Couldn't be doing better.

And Vicky—she's all right?"

"Yes. Haxon got there in the nick of time, the black boy says. Lynch had murdered his companion, the other bushranger, not an hour before they reached Lynch. Shot him in the back of the head."

"Good God!" one of the troopers exclaimed.

"And Haxon wasn't hurt?" Mary asked, eyes fixed on Halliday.

"No. There was a bit of a shindy after Lynch had fired several times at Haxon and missed, but our man got him and tied him up."

Mountjoy could not quite believe all this.

"It sounds fishy to me," he said bluntly. "Maybe Haxon joined up with Lynch and they are having a laugh on you. It would be like that beggar, Haxon."

"It wouldn't be like him at all," Mary protested. "If he says he's bringing Vicky safe home, he's bringing her."

"Your money's on the right horse, Mary." The squatter nodded. "Bushranger or no bushranger, I like Haxon. You didn't see him step into this room and knock over Lynch's apple cart so quick you couldn't have said Jack Robinson first. We did, Sergeant. And afterward I saw him shoot that other ruffian, Hawkes, through the heart. On top of which I rode with him two days. He's a right one, my word."

"Just the same I'll put the cuffs on him if he comes here."

"Not if I get a chance to warn him first," the squatter came back staunchly. "I'm against bushrangers, but I happen to know something about this fellow you don't."

"I know more than I did ten minutes ago," the constable said. "He's had the cards stacked against him. I make you a present of that. But he's an outlaw just the same. He's been in a dozen stickups. He robbed the Parametta bank. You can't get away from that."

"How do you know he robbed the bank?" Halliday asked. "Some one did. Everybody took it for granted it was Haxon. Why couldn't it have been this Lynch?"

"He'll get a chance to prove he didn't do it when we take him," the officer said with dogmatic emphasis.

"If you take him," Halliday corrected. "I said when."

During this conversation Mountjoy had not once for more than a moment at a time lifted his eyes from the man sitting on the porch. Now he glanced at the letter in his hand, folded it and put it in his pocket.

"I've a little business to do," he said, rising from his seat.

A call from the porch interrupted him. It came from Killough, and there was astonishment in his voice.

"It's Vicky, begad."

Those in the dining room trooped out to the porch. Three riders were moving at a road gait toward the house. The one in front had his hands bound loosely together. A rope underneath the belly of the horse connected his feet. He slumped heavily in the saddle. On his heavy face was written the sullen look of defeat. The other two rode side by side.

"Fegs, you were right," Mountjoy said to Halliday, amazed at what he saw.

IT WAS hardly believable, but he could not doubt his eyes. The bushranger, Haxon, was riding in to the station, the rescued girl beside him, driving the other murderous bushranger before him, a captive.

Blake swung from the saddle and lifted Victoria to the ground. Mary was already there waiting to take her friend into her arms.

"Oh, Vicky!" she cried.

Victoria went to her with a sob.

In one of her hands Mary held the letter for Geoffrey Blake. She passed it to its owner. For one moment their eyes met. Then she gave her attention to Victoria.

"No gammon this time, Mr. Haxon," ordered the sergeant. "Stick 'em up."

Blake nodded to him, smiling derisively.

"No use to tell you I am Lyulph Harcourt Beresford Hetherington, I suppose."

"Bail up," the constable ordered.

One of Mountjoy's men had stepped forward and taken hold of the bridle of the bushranger's horse; the other stood

just back of him with a pistol in his hand. The sergeant carried a sawed-off carbine.

"Bowled out at last," Blake said, still with his sardonic smile.

He had not at any time made even a lift of the hand toward his revolvers. Now, instead of putting his arms in the air, he ripped open the envelop of his letter and began to read. Swiftly his eyes ran down the page. He turned the sheet.

"Did you hear me?" Mountjoy said sharply. "Up with your hands, Haxon."

"The name appears to be Blake now," the outlaw corrected, his gaze still sweeping over the writing.

"I know all about that," the sergeant snapped. "Just had word from headquarters. But even if you didn't kill the man in England, you're still a bush-ranger. Put the darbies on him, Brown."

Blake handed the letter to Mary.

"Please read it," he said, and held his wrists out for the handcuffs.

Brown fastened the irons.

"What's that you say, Sergeant?" Killough burst out. "That he didn't kill Mullin. That's bosh, you know. Of course he killed him. If he didn't who did?"

Mountjoy turned sternly on him, his square jaw set.

"I don't know who killed him, Captain. Maybe you do. Anyhow, you're under arrest for murdering him. Orders from England."

The color washed out of the captain's face as he stared at the constable. It couldn't be true. It couldn't. Not after all these years of safety. Yet Killough knew, with a steadily mounting terror, that a stroke out of the blue had come to destroy him. He could not understand how it was possible, but he had no doubt of the fact.

"It's your busy day, Sergeant," Blake said nonchalantly. "Three bushrangers and a murderer. Isn't that rather a good haul? Too bad the others won't net you as much as I will. A thousand apiece would set you up in business."

"The reward for you has been withdrawn," the constable replied, literal minded as always. "I've just had notice to that effect."

"Deuced bad luck, and I suppose there isn't any reward for dear Henry. You'll have to be content with cashing in on Mr. Lynch and his friend."

"I lose out there too," Mountjoy said. "You captured them, not I. But we won't worry about that, Mr. Blake, if that's your name. I call it a pretty good cleanup."

"This is outrageous," Killough said hoarsely, trying to stamp out the rising panic in him. "I'll see some one is broke for this, my man. What evidence is there against me? It's—absurd."

He tried to laugh, and fear rode in the mirthless sound that came from his dry throat.

"I don't know anything about the evidence," the constable returned curtly. "I know what my orders are."

"You'd better read the letter I've just received from Sir Eustace," suggested Blake. "Jones and his wife have peached. You killed Mullin because he was blackmailing you for that business of stealing the money from Sir Eustace. That's only the beginning of it. The police have dug up a lot more. Your goose is cooked, Henry."

The eyes of the cousins met. As he looked into the implacable face of the man he had wronged, Killough felt the cold waters of despair rising in him. He had played with loaded dice for high stakes and lost. Everything was gone. Sir Eustace would cut him off without a shilling. Victoria would fling him aside. He would be kicked out of the army. The man whom he hated would come back into his own. This was enough, but behind it was the grim shadow of the gallows. He had not the courage to face his punishment. It was more than he could bear.

Looking at him, Mary pitied the soldier. The look on his blotched green face was ghastly. When he spoke, it was with difficulty.

"It's a mistake, Sergeant. I'll—go with you, of course. Like to—go to my room a moment."

"Go with him, Ellis," the sergeant said to one of his men. "We'll get started soon as we can."

Killough limped into the house. He had been gone less than a minute when the sound of a shot rang out. Mountjoy bounded across the porch into the house,

leaving his other two prisoners under the eyes of the two constables.

Blake looked gravely at Mary.

"He's found the way out," the bush-ranger said.

His guess was corect. Killough had picked up the derringer on the table in his room and shot himself before the trooper could intervene.

CHAPTER XXXIV

JOURNEY'S START

IT WAS amazing how swiftly the difficulties of Blake's position were ironed out. He was, to be sure, an outlaw, but one toward whom the whole sympathy of the public was extended. The newspapers were full of insistent demands for his pardon. He had been driven into crime as an alternative to a life of hopeless slavery after having been cruelly wronged by society. As a bush-ranger he had never taken human life or been in any way ruthless. He had wiped out, singlehanded, the worst band of ruffians the colony had known. The McQueen station had been saved by him, and he had rescued a young woman abducted by the villain, Lynch.

Finally, one by one, the people who had been robbed by the Haxon gang began to receive by post packages of money to cover their losses. Even the Parametta bank was mysteriously reimbursed. It was understood that the leader of the gang, a young Englishman of rank, had paid back the amounts taken to satisfy his conscience. He had found the means to do this through a fund advanced him by a relative at home to meet any pressing immediate needs.

The absurdity of this emotional outburst on the part of the public gave the object of it some cynical amusement. Blake had not changed. He was the same man he had been a few weeks earlier, but then he had been a murderous outlaw hated and detested whereas now he was a hero.

He was given two pardons, one from the British crown for the murder of Mullin, the other from the colonial government for his crimes in the bush. The latter was handed to him the day Lynch expiated his evil deeds on Gallows Hill.

Geoffrey Blake was a free man. He moved from prison to the Royal Hotel, where he was annoyed by the constant attention showered upon him. Men and women looked him over as though he were some monstrosity of a side show at a circus. Invitations from people he had never met poured in on him.

His intention was to return to England for a visit to his uncle as soon as he had finished an important piece of business. It was that business which took him on horseback across Hyde Park to Macquarie Place one sunny morning.

He tied his horse in front of a rather pretentious house and knocked at the door, upon which was a plate bearing the legend, "Major Lee Preston Day." A maid servant opened to him and said she thought Miss McQueen was in the rose garden. If he would care to walk out there he might find her; unless he would prefer to have her call Miss McQueen.

Geoffrey chose to go direct to the rose garden.

He caught a glimpse of a young woman in a garden hat and gloves snipping roses into a basket. Not until he was close did he see that this was not Mary but Victoria.

At sound of his footsteps, Victoria turned to see who was coming. A wave of pink swept into her soft cheeks.

"You're out. I'm so glad," she cried.

"I'm rather glad myself," he said.

A little wanly, she smiled.

"In the end we get what we deserve, don't we? Our chickens come home to roost. Henry thought he was so safe, after the dreadful thing he did, but God reached out and touched him. We can't escape, any of us."

"It's all over at last for you and me," Blake said. "We can turn over a new leaf—and forget."

"Yes, that will be easy, won't it—for you?" she said. "With Mary by your side. Will you live in England? I suppose so, now your uncle is so eager for you to come home."

He ignored her reference to Mary.

"I'll not live in England permanently, at least for some years. I have obligations here. It has been agreed by the authorities to turn over to me as as-

signed men the four bushrangers of the Haxon and the Lynch gangs. They are not bad chaps, any of them, and I mean to see they have a chance. I had to promise to buy a sheep station where I can give them work."

"You'll have a trained helper in Mary," Victoria said.

"You take a good deal for granted," he said, smiling at her.

"I don't take anything for granted," she differed. "Mary has always loved you. She is getting what she deserves too, and so are you."

He took her hand. Victoria knew that he was saying goodby both to her and to the misadventures of that stormy past which had almost wrecked them both. Her lips quivered a little but her big eyes met his bravely.

"What you deserve is a life much better than the one you would have had if Henry had lived," he told her. "You have had good fortune too."

"I suppose so. I'm just a little girl that cried for the moon and couldn't get it." She added hurriedly, "I didn't mean to say that, Geoff. I really didn't. Mother's right. We mustn't say things like that. We mustn't think them. It's unmaidenly—and bold. But it's a little late for me to think of that now, isn't it?"

"You are unhappy," he said gently, "but that won't last."

"Won't it?"

"No. You are young, and full of life. It won't be so hard to forget as you think it will."

"Comforting to hear you say so, since you've had experience in forgetting." Once more she rushed into apology. "Oh, Geoff, I keep saying things. I don't mean that I blame. I'm just, as you say, not very happy, but then you know it won't last."

In spite of her wistful irony she knew what he had said was true. The future looked empty now, but there would come a time when it would be full of all sorts of hopes.

"There doesn't seem to be much for me to say, does there?" he answered.

"There's one thing I want to say, Geoff. It does us good to suffer. I'm not so selfish as I was. And I'm going to buck up and not whine. If ever a chance for happiness comes to me again, I'm not going to be afraid to fight for it."

"Bravo! That's the spirit. Good days ahead, Vicky."

"And to prove I'm not so selfish I'm going to find Mary and send her to you, Geoff." To make sure her voice was under control, she stopped before she said her goodby. "I'll give your prophecy back to you both—good days ahead."

Victoria picked up her basket of roses and walked into the house.

From the main walk Blake turned into a narrow one which led to a garden seat beneath a peach tree. He waited, content not to hurry his happiness.

Presently he caught sight of Mary's head above the rose bushes.

Geoffrey threw up a hand.

"I'm here."

Her heart gave a jump.

"It's you. Vicky didn't tell me who it was. Isn't it good to be free at last?"

"Very good, but not the best." He took her hand in his. "I'm already tired of being free."

"So soon?" Mary felt the color beating into her cheeks below the tan. "Are you the kind of person who always wants what you haven't got?"

"No. I'm the kind who wants what he wants."

"Is that a riddle?" She did not wait for the answer. "You're going to England by the next boat, I hear. No doubt you'll be glad to get away from the colony and forget your unhappiness here."

"I'm coming back to grow up with the country. It's strange what wide spaces do to you. Afraid I couldn't be content with the well ordered life of England now. And one can forget too much, you know. I've found happiness here as well as unhappiness."

"I'm glad," she said simply.

"I came to ask you a question, Mary. Will you go back to England with me?"

A wave of joy warmed her whole being.

"I'd go to the end of the world with you."

He held out his arms and she came to him.

THE END

THREE SCORE *And Twenty*

By
HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

TOLLIVER RADD lay dying. Propped on pillows in the great fourposter bed, his long white beard flowed over his chest. He was an enormous man and, though his shoulders rested against the pillows, he held his massive head, with its flowing white locks, erect. For three months he had been about this business of dying, and because in all that time the sun had not shone on him, a pallor lay on his usually ruddy cheeks. The big hands, lying inertly on the coverlet, were bleached.

He was in one of the two rooms which had comprised the original house, built of logs by his own hands fifty years ago when he was a man of thirty. Since that time there had been many additions, until now the house covered much ground; for, like the prophets of old, his sons and their wives, and his sons' sons and their wives were members of his household.

The house was very quiet, with the sun pouring gloriously down on the world outside. Only the hens clucking in the yard and a mockingbird caroling riotously in the rosevine over the open front window broke the silence.

But Tolliver Radd was not lonesome. So many things had happened in the years that lay behind him. And he thought of how good the people had been to him through these weeks of his dying, even those who had called him a wicked, blasphemous man. They had brought him broths and jellies; and young chickens the size of partridges, smothered in their own gravy; and young squirrels from the woods, so tender that the meat melted from the bones when he dragged them through his strong teeth.

Even those who might have been counted his enemies had come to see him; for his presence was missed from the countryside and from the little town, on the edge of which he lived, much as the strongest voice, when it is still, is missed from a choir of singers. There was old Sim Wescott, the miller down on Puppy Creek, between whom and Tolliver Radd there had been a feud of years' standing. Shortly before he was stricken down, Tolliver, following an argument, had seized the miller about the waist, raised him on high and pitched him headlong into his own mill pond.

But Sim had come to see him, bringing with him a brace of quails shot out of season. He had sat on the edge of his chair near the bed and taken into his own one of Tolliver Radd's hands. And when he saw how white it was the tears had come into his rheumy old eyes. Before his departure he had taken from beneath his coat a pint bottle of his own distilling, and when he saw that Tolliver had seen what he had brought, he set it down beneath the edge of the bed, within reach of his hand.

But Sarah, Tolliver Radd's young wife, also had seen the bottle, and she carried it quickly away. For Sarah, fifty years his junior, was a good woman—so good that, like jam on a child's hand, some of her goodness was

quite likely to get smeared on those around her. She was determined that Tolliver should not depart this life with the odor of strong drink on his breath. In the goodness of her heart she had given away to the negro field hands, who were none too particular about their fitting, his big rawhide boots and most of his other clothes; all except the black broadcloth suit hanging in the closet, with the big black shoes, neatly polished, set beneath where it hung—his burial clothes.

Tolliver had eaten all the good things his friends and neighbors had brought in to him; and he knew that he had gained in weight, even in his dying, so that he had to unfasten the top button of his long cotton drawers. He had decided to instruct Sarah to leave unfastened the top button on the trousers of his burial clothes; because the suit fitted him snugly, and he did not want his belly cramped, even after he was dead.

AS HE lay here alone with his thoughts he became sad; for there was one old friend, dearest of them all, who had not been near him during this business of dying. Nate Dingby, the incorrigible, lived alone in a small log cabin on Willow Creek. It was known that Tolliver's illness had followed a visit to Nate on that bitterly cold night which came just before the breaking up of Winter; but it never became known that Tolliver had lain most of the night on the sodden ground with the cold rain, which was half sleet, beating down on him. Tolliver Radd considered that nobody's business.

On that night, seated before the great log fire, their argument had waxed long. The jug on the floor between their chairs perhaps had passed more often than they realized, and its content must have been unusually potent; for when Tolliver had gone out to mount the big black stallion, Tempest, impatiently pawing beneath the swinging limb where he was tied, the feat had become strangely difficult. Hours later, as gray dawn was breaking over the world, when Tempest had nudged him into wakefulness, he arose from the ground with a pain in his chest and lungs that was fit complement to the hell fire raging in other regions where the liquor had seared him.

Without Tolliver Radd's knowledge, Sarah, his wife, had summoned the doctor, who had come to him where he sat in his big armchair before the fire, his plug of chewing tobacco on a table beside him and on the floor, within easy reach of his hand, a bottle of strong stuff with which he had set in to cure what he insisted was only a bad cold.

The doctor had taken his temperature and had felt his pulse. He had thumped; he had prodded. He had listened in front and he had listened behind. Gravely he had shaken his head. Between them, he and Sarah had persuaded Tolliver to get into bed. They had taken away his bottle and his chewing tobacco. In whispered confab with Sarah at the door, the doctor had told her that Tolliver Radd was a dying man, that his heart, which had beat so faithfully for eighty years, was likely to stop at any moment.

Like a dutiful wife she told him what the doctor had said, and with her apron over her head she had wept bitterly. And because Sarah was so distressed by what the doctor had told her, Tolliver Radd became very angry. Swearing a mighty oath, he declared that if ever again that ill-begotten doctor were summoned into his presence he would arise from his dying and pitch him through the window. And because he was not given to idle boasting, Sarah had heeded his words.

He had accepted the fact that he was dying. For it could only be the approach of death that had taken the strength from him, until he could not even turn over in bed without the assistance of others—he who, so recently, had broken and trained the big black stallion, Tempest, so called because he was the most unmanageable horse in the county; he who, only last Fall, at the roundup of range cattle, had leaped into a pen where a bull had his grandson down, about to gore him and, seizing the beast by the horns, had conquered him. And though the pain and the weakness had now passed, Sarah, as a dutiful wife, had never let him forget that at any moment his heart was likely to stop its accustomed beat.

AS HE lay alone on this sunny afternoon, thinking of the old friend who had deserted him in his dying, he heard a cautious step in the hall. Around the edge of the door jamb there slowly came into view an old felt hat, frayed around the edges. Beneath it straggled unkempt sandy hair. A wizened face, dominated by an enormous sandy mustache, hove into view; and above the mustache were bushy eyebrows, shadowing small blue eyes, wonderfully alert.

"Ain't you dead yit?" the visitor asked in a piping voice as he gazed at the figure on the bed.

Tolliver looked sternly at the little man, who had now edged into the room, but still stood nervously near the doorway. Settling back on his pillows, he stroked his long white beard, which was wide and flat, and divided it in the middle.

"Why haven't you been to see me befo' this, Nate?" he demanded in his deep, resonant voice.

"Sary was one too many for me, Tolliver. I got far as the gate two, three times, an' once to the front steps; but she always turned me back. Said I wasn't no fit company for a dyin' man."

"She's right, Nate; she's right," Tolliver said with a sigh.

"Where're you sick at?"

"Ain't sick."

"Where's yo' mis'ry?

"Aint got no mis'ry."

"Then what the hell's the matter with you?"

"It's my heart," Tolliver replied solemnly. "Any little excitemint, at any time, is liable to make it stop beatin'. Sary don't let nothin' happen to disturb me. One day when I got out of bed an' run to the window to watch a dogfight in the yard, she thought the end had come. Called in all the chillun to my dyin' bedside an' waited for my heart to stop beatin'. Ef it hadn't been for my great-granddaughter, Lucy May, who's got a will of her own, Sary would have sent for the undertaker."

"An' did it stop a-beatin'?" asked Nate, his sharp face thrust forward.

"No, you fool!" roared Tolliver. "Ain't you got sense enough to know that a man's heart don't stop beatin' till he's dead as a hammer? They made me nervous, standin' round the bed in silent grief, an' I run 'em out. An' Sary had a spell of the weeps because she was scared I was goin' to pass out with blasphemy on my breath."

"Tolliver," said Nate judicially in his piping voice, his shaggy head on one side, "my opinion of you is that you're a henpecked, browbeat, downtrod piece of hog tripe. Any man what will let a woman ride atop of him like Sary rides you an' hold him to his dyin', in spite of himself, has lost his grip, his gumption an' his guts. Take me. They ain't no woman never got a strangle holt on me. I—"

"You!" stormed Tolliver. "Ef I was you, you shriveled up fragmint of dried cowhide, I'd go out an' stick my head in a hole an' pull the hole in after me. Ain't you jest acknowledged that you let Sary run you off every time you started in here to see me?"

Nate had no answer to this, and the two glared at each other, blue eyes clashing with blue eyes.

"How did you manage to slip in this time?" Tolliver demanded.

"I watched an' seen Sary an' the youthers g-goin' doon—oo-m-moo-m—" Nate paused in distress, his keen little eyes looking anxiously about him.

"Remove that there screen from in front the fireplace," Tolliver said compassionately.

Nate deluged the chimney back, shifted his cud and turned to the man on the bed.

"Where do you spit at?" he asked.

"Why, Nate, I ain't spit in three months," Tolliver said mournfully. "Ain't had nothin' to spit."

"You mean to say she's even took yo' chewin' away from you?"

"We won't go into that no mo'," Tolliver replied. "Where was Sary an' the others goin' when you managed to sneak in?"

"They was goin' into town. They's excitemint down there. That there Steve Bellfew has got into trouble an' got himself arrested an'—"

"Steve Bellfew," Tolliver rumbled, sitting up. "He oughter be arrested. He oughter be hanged! He an' his pa, old

Horace, are timber-thievin' rogues. He's a impidint whippersnapper. He may be a firebrand, like folks say, but ef I was on my feet, I'd make him eat his own fire. He had the nerve to come a-courtin' Lucy May. An' when I went to see him an' asked him what he meant by hangin' round my great-granddaughter, you know what he said to me?"

"What'd he say?" Nate eased himself down into a rocking chair within easy reach of the fireplace, wriggled, drew a large bottle from his hip pocket, placed it on the hearth, and settled back in the chair. "What'd he say to you, Tolliver? Tell you to go to hell?"

"Worse than that, Nate. Worse than that. Standin' up to me, toe to toe, he looked me square in the eyes an' told me to mind my own business. An' when I reached out to grab him in the collar with one hand an' slap some respect into him with the other, he backed off away from me. But, though he kept out of my reach, he looked me square in the eyes again an' told me to run along, that he didn't fight with no octorarian. That's what he called me, Nate, a octorarian—some highfalutin cussword he learned off at school, I reckin."

"I've heard you called worse soundin' names than that," Nate said with equanimity.

"I couldn't git my hands on him; but I come home an' told Lucy May that ef ever I seen, heard, or heard tell of her so much as passin' the time of day with that there impidint upstart, I'd spank her till she'd have to eat her vittles off the mantelpiece. But I reckin that since I've been flat on my back, a dyin' man, he's been seein' her all he damn pleases."

"He ain't that kind, Tolliver. When I heard what folks has been sayin' 'bout Lucy May an' Tanner Bishop—"

"Tanner Bishop! Tanner Bishop! You don't mean that there stinker, Tanner Bishop is—is—?"

"I only know what folks say. An' when I told Steve, sort of jokin', that he'd better look alive, or he'd have his time beat, he said that he'd called it off for a spell. Said that you objected to him, an' he wouldn't take advantage of you when you was down, but that when you was on yo' feet again, or dead an' in hell, he'd do what he damn pleased."

"He said that, did he? Goin' to defy me, is he?"

Tossing aside the bedclothes, Tolliver Radd swung his feet to the floor and drew himself to his full six feet three. Clenching his fists, he flexed his great arms. The pallor had gone from his cheeks and above the white beard the red blood coursed darkly. If ever his heart wanted the excuse of excitement to stop beating, here was its chance.

"I'll learn him who to defy!"

"He ain't goin' to defy nobody long," the little man in the chair assured him. Then, pointing a derisive finger, "What sort of a dress is that there you got flappin' 'bout yo' knee jints?"

Tolliver looked down at the abbreviated nightshirt, beneath which the cotton drawers reached to his ankles.

"That's a nightgown, you ignurunt, swamp-runnin' varmint. When a man is goin' to die decent in his bed, he has to dress accordin'."

WHILE Tolliver fidgeted in embarrassment, Nate lay back in his chair and laughed till the water came into his eyes.

"Why didn't she put you in a lace cap, with strings to tie under yo' chin?" he asked scornfully.

"Never did like it myself," Tolliver acknowledged. "Git twisted up in it every time I goes to sleep." With a sweep of his powerful arm, he ripped the garment to the hem, jerked it off of him and threw it at the chuckling Nate. "What was that you was sayin' 'bout Steve? Has he kilt somebody? Are they going to hang him?"

"They don't hang nobody in this State no mo', Tolliver, as you know perfectly well. They burns them in the 'lectric chair."

"What are they goin' to 'lectrify him for?"

"They ain't. The good citizens round here are goin' to lynch him."

"Lynch him! What for? When?"

"They're gatherin' in town now. That's where all the folks from around yo' place is. That's how come me to be able to sneak in."

"Goin' to lynch him, right here under my nose, an' me knowin' nothin' about

it?" Tolliver demanded.

"'Fraid to tell you, I reckin," Nate said; then added, "Mought make yo' heart stop beatin'."

"What are they goin' to lynch him for?"

"For shootin' them two Rouder boys last week."

"Was the Rouder boys shot? What for? Seems to me I've been missin' a lot. Why didn't somebody tell me?"

"Mought make yo' heart stop beatin'."

"Ef you say that again, Nate, I—I'll pitch you through the window. What'd he shoot them Rouder boys for?"

"I only know what folks tells me, Tolliver. But it seems that Steve an' his pa, old man Horace, cut some of the Rouder timber on Tinker's bayou an' put it in the water. Them Rouders knowed it all the time. Watched 'em do it. Then when the raft was all ready to go out, they slipped down at night when Steve an' Horace was gone, an' poled it out in the river. They didn't want no cross-up with Steve, firebrand that he is; but they thought they'd jest let the two Bellfews lose the labor they'd spent in cuttin' an' puttin' the raft in, an' take it on to market themselves.

"Then, a mile or so below the mouth of the bayou, when the raft was sweepin' in near some overhangin' titis, Steve Bellfew riz up with a shotgun an' shot 'em both down. He shot Pete, who was managin' the sweep on the tail end of the raft first. Tobe, who was fendin' off from the bank with a pole, jumped for his own shotgun. He fired into the bushes where the flash had come from jest as the second flash blazed out. The buckshot went through him in half a dozen places. They was found on the raft where it had grounded on a sandbar. Tobe lived jest long enough to tell how it all happened. In course folks was riled 'bout the sneakin' way they had been ambushed from the bushes, an' a big crowd volunteered to go with the sheriff after Steve who, it was thought, would show fight. But he come as gentle as a lamb as soon as they hailed at the gate. They have since decided to take him away from the sheriff an' lynch him."

Drawing up another chair, Tolliver seated himself across the hearth, facing Nate. For a space he sat thoughtfully in silence. Then—

"How did Tobe know it was Steve shot him?"

"I didn't hear. He maybe didn't explain 'fo' he died."

"What does Steve say?"

"He says that it's up to them to prove he done the shootin'. But the citizens havin' took the matter into their own hands, they won't be no necessity to prove nothin'."

"Nate, Steve didn't shoot them Rouder boys."

"How do you know that, Tolliver?"

"Because a man who will stand up to me, toe to toe, an' look me in the eye an' defy me like Steve done, an' then refuse to take advantage of me when I'm on my dyin' bed, wouldn't hide in the bushes an' shoot down unarmed men."

"But Tobe Rouder—"

"Thought it was Steve because he was afraid of Steve. Steve was the first one hopped into his mind when his brother was shot down."

"Then who done it?"

"Where is Horace Bellfew? Won't he talk?"

"They ain't found Horace. All Steve will say is that he's away from home, which they all knowed when they searched the place, anyhow."

"Did they look down at the old shack in the swamp, where Horace used to live 'fo' he married that there schoolteacher gal who, ef she had lived to finish her job, mought have made somethin' out of him?"

"I don't reckin none of 'em know where the shack is, Tolliver, an' I ain't found it my business to tell 'em."

"Maybe you an' me are thinkin' the same thing, Nate."

"Maybe we are, Tolliver."

"An' Steve won't talk?"

"Won't either acknowledge or deny the killin'. All he says is they'll have to prove it."

"It seems that while I've been layin' here a-dyin', things has been transpirin'," Tolliver said presently.

"It do seem that you taken a unhandy time," Nate agreed. "But with all them three score an' twenty year on yo' head

I don't reckin there was nothin' else for you to do."

"Three score an' twenty be damned!" Tolliver stormed at him. "Ef it wasn't for my heart liable to take out on me any minute, I'd be sound as I ever was. An' heart or no heart, seems like it's up to you an' me to stop this here lynchin'."

"Looks that way, old pardner. That's the reason I crope in here soon as I found the way clear."

Tolliver lifted the bottle which Nate had placed on the hearth, squinted through it at the light, drew the cork and sniffed the contents.

"Ain't had a dram since I was took down, Nate," he said as the saliva rolled in his mouth and drooled at his lips' edge.

Nate smiled and nodded in approval as Tolliver raised the bottle to his lips; but suddenly he leaned forward and shrilled at him—

"Tolliver, Tolliver, dad-burn yo' gluttonous hide!"

But the empty bottle went crashing against the chimney back.

"There was a big dry spot to be moistened," he said in apology as he wiped his mouth on the back of hand. "Gimme some chewin'."

His strong yellow teeth wrenched at the plug, and Nate looked ruefully at the small corner Tolliver returned to him.

Tolliver arose and stroked his flat belly.

"How'd that there little drink make you feel?" Nate asked.

"Like I'd swallowed a shevel full of hot coals. Where in hell did you git that stuff? You do git holt of the hottenest! But it do make me tingle, even in my fingers an' toes. An' now, old-timer, the sun has sot an' night's comin' on. We got to git stirrin'. While I put on these here burial clothes, which is all I got left, you run out an' put the saddle an' bridle on Tempest."

"An' s'pose I runs into Sary?" Nate asked, glancing nervously over his shoulder as if, until that moment, he had forgotten the prevailing danger.

Tolliver winked mischievously.

"Ef you meet up with her, tell her to run in here quick, that my heart's stop beatin'. I'll handle Sary."

TOLLIVER put on his burial clothes. As he had suspected, the trousers were too tight, so he left the top button unfastened. He looked for his wide-brimmed black hat. But as a corpse has no need for a hat, Sarah had given it to the negro preacher who shepherded the flock of Big Zion over on Oak Ridge.

So, bareheaded in the deepening twilight, he was just entering the lot gate when Nate came shooting out of the hall of the barn, bridle trailing, with Tempest, ears flattened, head extended, close behind him. Just as the wide open jaws were about to close on Nate's shoulder, the little man leaped to one side, and the big black stallion passed him. As Tempest whirled, Tolliver shouted at him:

"Tempest! Whoa, sir! What do you mean? Come here!"

The horse threw up his head, turned, nickered softly and went to meet Tolliver Radd. And as Tempest, now chastened and submissive, came to hand, Tolliver felt once more the thrill of accomplishment, as he had felt when he conquered this magnificent beast.

From a safe distance Nate swore at Tempest; and he swore at Tolliver for having sent him into a death trap. But Tolliver bade him bring the bridle, and said to him:

"He ain't been handled right since I been down. I'll see to him myself after this."

"Where is yo' hoss?" he asked when he had saddled Tempest and was leading him out through the yard.

"In a dogwood thicket below the field fence," Nate replied as he went ahead to open the gate. Suddenly, with his hand on the latch, he shrank back and retreated behind Tolliver. "It's Sary," he whispered.

Sarah, a plump, comely woman of thirty, holding by the hand Tolliver Radd's youngest son, a child of seven, came in at the gate.

"Tolliver Radd!" she screamed when she saw him. "What are you doin' out here in—in yo' burial clothes?"

"Stand out of my way, woman," he said sternly.

"But, Tolliver, you'll die. Yo'—yo' heart—"

"Stand out of my way, I tell you."

"Oh, Tolliver, they're goin' to lynch Steve Bellfew, an' I can't do nothin' with Lucy May. She's takin' on somethin' terrible, an' him a murderer. It ain't decent."

"Go tell Lucy May to come home. Tell her I said so. Tell her they ain't goin' to lynch Steve. Tell her I said that, too."

"But, Tolliver—"

"Go!"

Submissively Sarah turned and, still dragging the child by the hand, sped away down the path.

"We'll go to Horace's shack in the swamp," Tolliver said as he swung himself on to Tempest and fitted his feet in the stirrups.

The horses leaped into a gallop and for a space the two men rode knee to knee. But Tempest fought for his head, and Tolliver let him have his way.

The great muscles of the horse rippling beneath him, the clatter of the unshod hoofs on the wooded road was music in his ears. Head thrown back, his white locks streaming, his beard, divided, flowing back over his shoulders, he took the wind in his face. This was exhilaration; this was joy; this was life! Tolliver Radd laughed aloud. Pounding along a quarter of a mile behind, Nate caught the echoes as they drifted back through the pines.

The road that plunged into the swamp divided and subdivided, so that Tolliver became lost and was entangled in a bamboo thicket, shouting profanely, when Nate came upon him.

"Ef you'll stop cussin' long enough, an' come out of them brambles, I'll show you the road," he said.

Tolliver had dismounted and now came crashing into the open, leading Tempest. And as straight as a marten to his gourd, Nate led the way down the uncertain swamp road. The road became a path, a narrow track, made almost impassable by overhanging trees and bushes. Here they dismounted and led their horses. Giant gum trees arched overhead and bay trees rustled, with here and there a cypress, churn-butted, with spreading roots and upthrust knees.

As the swamp growth gave way to oaks and a tangle of crêpe myrtles, they tied their horses. A spreading water oak, with trailing limbs, shadowed the long abandoned log shack that once had been the home of old Horace when he lived alone, a swamp hermit.

In the darkness they stood whispering together.

"I see no crack of light," Tolliver said.

"It ain't gospel that he's here," Nate replied. "Ef he hears us, he'll come out of there a-spittin' an' a-scratchin'. Old Horace will shoot first an' ask questions when it's too late."

"We'll have to creep in on him," Tolliver said. "Follow me."

ON HANDS and knees, but with more rustle of dead leaves than he cared to hear, Tolliver Radd led the way, with Nate creeping fearfully behind. Through a clump of crêpe myrtles he peered at the darker shadow that was the cabin. There was no ray of light, no sound. A brooding silence and an atmosphere of desolation hung over the place.

Still with infinite caution, Tolliver Radd crawled nearer. The door of the cabin, sagging on its hinges, was ajar. Here he paused and once more listened. When he could hear no sound, he thrust in his head.

Within the room he could smell things—stale grease, musty bedding. He knew that the place was inhabited. Then an eye blinked at him, a red eye, which he knew to be a live coal, dying among the embers that were already dead.

He felt in his pocket for a match, remembered that he had on his burial clothes and turned to Nate, who was crouched at his elbow. Holding three of them together, he rasped them across the floor.

The interior of the log walled cabin leaped into view, and before him he saw old quilts on a bed of pinestraw in one corner. Across the hearth, prone and uncouthly sprawled, lay a silent figure.

Tolliver leaped to his feet and shoved open the door. Before the matches in his hand had sputtered out, he lighted a rich pine splinter at the chimney corner, so that they had adequate illumination.

While Nate held the torch, Tolliver turned over the body. It was old Horace Bellfew, unshaven and unkempt, tangled gray locks spread about his head on the floor. There was a fleck of dried blood on his lips, a small blue hole in his chest. Tolliver Radd sat back on his heels.

"It was as we thought, Nate. He hid in the bushes an' shot them two. That was his stripe. But one of Tobe's buckshot got him, an' he crope off here to his hole like a varmint to die."

"Waal, that's only guesswork; an' we can't do him no good," Nate said philosophically.

"No; we're too late to do him any good, or harm, either," Tolliver agreed.

He rebuttoned the shirt, stooped and, lifting the body, flung it across his shoulder.

"Where're you goin' with that there carcass?" Nate protested.

"Old Horace has cashed in," Tolliver said as he led the way through the door, "but we got to think of the livin'. I'm takin' him to my house. The way I've got things planned, it's best so."

"What will Steve say?"

"It's Steve I'm thinkin' of, Nate."

"Think we can clear him of the murder charge?"

"We'll have to. Good thing Horace wasn't dead when we got here."

"Wasn't dead!"

"Git ahead of me with that there torch, Nate. Want me to butt my brains out agin a tree?"

"You got idees, Tolliver?"

"Ain't I always got idees? You be watchin' to back me up, ef need be."

"I'm with you, old pardner. But remember, it's knowed, by Tobe's dyin' statemint, that Steve an' Horace stole the Rouder timber for that there raft. It's been suspected that he was mixed up with Horace in stealin' timber. Now he's a branded timber thief."

"Ever hear of changin' a brand, Nate? Steve's jest been runnin' in the wrong pasture."

"As soon think of tryin' to handle a wildcat as that there young fire-eater."

"Caught a wildcat once. Jumped in the creek with it an' helt it under water till it stopped fightin' an' I could git the right sort of grip on it. Aim to use the same means with Steve."

"I'm with you, old pardner," Nate said rather hazily, "jest so I don't have to take no part in the handlin'."

As they galloped up to the side gate and flung themselves from their horses, Lucy May, a slender, dark haired girl of seventeen, with scarlet lips and a pretty face that shone luminously pale in the starlight, came running out to meet them.

"Granddaddy, Sarah told me that you would not let them lynch Steve," she panted.

"An' I will not, chick-a-biddy."

"But they're goin' to attack the jail. You can see the glow of the torches from here. Tanner Bishop is leadin' them."

"That stinker!" Tolliver Radd roared. "But I have here a dead man, Steve's father. I will put him on my bed. Sary!" he shouted as he went stomping into the house.

And while Sarah followed him meekly into the room, he eased his burden down on to the wide bed—the filthy old body, with its battered, mud encrusted shoes—on the clean white counterpane which Sarah had spread so neatly.

"Put a sheet over him. An' send for the preacher," he said to her as he turned away. "I will have need for a minister here this night."

Down the hill, into the little town, he rode at a gallop; and once more his beard flowed back over his shoulders, the wind whipped his long white hair. Along the unpaved street thundered the hoofs of the big stallion. No person was in sight; for the timid were safely behind locked doors, while those more bold had gathered about the square at the end of the one street to watch those who were determined to storm the jail and deliver Steve Bellfew to Judge Lynch.

AHEAD of him he could see the reflection of light, hear the hoarse murmur of the excited mob. On the edge of the square in which stood the jail and courthouse, he reined in his horse. Against the front of the jail the throng was dense-packed, while on the outskirts it was more scattered, moving restlessly. At the fringes hung groups of spectators,

whispering together in awe. Fat, resinous torches danced about like fireflies, trailing black smoke above them.

They had brought a log and as many as could grasp it stood on either side. With this they were going to batter in the jail door. All eyes were turned in that direction, so they did not see Tolliver Radd until he had reined in Tempest and thundered at them—

"Men of the county, what does this mean?"

As if pulled by a single wire, all heads turned in his direction.

"My Gawd, it's pa," shouted David, his third son by his first wife. He was one of those who grasped the timber. Releasing his hold, he melted back into the crowd.

"It's his hant," shouted another. "He's died an' riz again an' come ridin' out on Tempest in his burial clothes." This was Warrack, youngest son of the same brood.

Slowly Tolliver Radd rode forward, and the crowd parted to let him pass, so that he rode through a lane of torches, which threw their ruddy glow over the white bearded, white haired man and the black, foam flecked horse beneath him.

"Drop that there log!" he ordered sternly when he had reached the jail door.

Faces were turned up to him in uncertainty. Their leader, a wiry, slender young man with swarthy skin and a small black mustache, a flaming torch in his hand, leaped down from the jail steps. It was Tanner Bishop, woods rider for the turpentine firm of Barlow & Holly. A handsome, reckless young rake; those who knew him best feared him most.

"This is none of yo' affair, Tolliver Radd," he shouted defiantly. "We're goin' to see that justice is done for a dastardly crime. Get to hell out of this befo' you are treated to the same medicine! Come on with that timber, boys!"

Leaning quickly, Tolliver Radd knotted one powerful hand in the young man's shirt at the open throat. Bishop struck at him with the torch; but Tolliver, catching it in his other hand, snatched it away from him and threw it, smoldering, on the ground. With apparently no effort, he lifted Bishop and threw him across the horse in front of the saddle. Writhing and twisting, fighting and cursing, Bishop struggled helplessly and called in vain for rescue by his erstwhile followers.

"Drop that there log!" Tolliver ordered again, and this time the timber was quickly lowered to the ground.

"Now git home with you!" Bishop still lying across the horse in front of him, he rode slowly among them. Some, not wishing to be recognized, turned their faces quickly away. Others, throwing down their torches, trampled them out with their feet. When the crowd was moving and quickly shifting off, he returned to the jail.

"Buck Ridgley, are you there?"

"Ready an' waitin'," the sheriff replied. "Let one of 'em so much as put his foot inside and I'll blast him into hell fire. There are three of us—me and my deputy and my prisoner. I've turned the prisoner loose and armed him. All I ask for is one clean shot at that skunk, Tanner Bishop."

"Waal, you won't git it, Buck. I've taken charge of Tanner. Bring yo' prisoner an' go up to my house. This here jail ain't no safe place."

"But, Tolliver, those folks out there—"

"Open the do', fool. Ain't I here to protect you?"

After some hesitancy, the sheriff opened the door and peered out. And only those torches could be seen that were lighting their holders quickly homeward.

Out into the glare of the light which shone from above the jail entrance there stepped beside the sheriff a tall young man in hickory shirt and jeans trousers. He was bareheaded, and his short, dark hair was brushed back from his forehead. He was tall and sinewy, with broad shoulders and a slender waist. Staring up at the white bearded man, his dark eyes blazed defiantly.

"What do you want with me at yo' house?" he demanded.

"Steve," Tolliver Radd said gently, "Nate an' I went down to the swamp shack an' found yo' pappy. He is dead, Steve."

The young man looked at Tolliver as if not comprehending what he had been

told, then murmured dazedly—

"My pappy dead?"

Then, squaring his shoulders, he raised his head. The blood coursed darkly into his tanned cheeks and his eyes flashed.

"By whose hand is he dead?" he demanded.

"That will come presently. Are you ready to deny that you killed the Rouder boys?"

"I will deny nothin'. Who killed my pappy?"

"Tobe Rouder killed him. Yo' pappy hid in the bushes an' shot them Rouder boys on the raft; but a buckshot from Tobe's gun got him through the lungs."

"That's a lie!" He took a step forward. "That's a lie, an' I'll choke it down yo' th'oat. *I* shot them Rouder boys."

For a space Tolliver Radd looked in silence at the quivering face. Then, smiling:

"Steve Bellfew, the longer I know you, the mo' I realize what a man you are. But it's no use, son. Befo' he died, yo' pappy confessed to me an' Nate that he had done the killin'. He told us to make it known, so that the suspicion which he had learned had fell on you would be lifted."

"But I didn't know he was hurt! He never told me. He said he had shot the Rouder boys an' was goin' to leave the country. He told me to let it be known he had killed them, so I would not be suspected. But I could not, Tolliver Radd. I could not. Sheriff, if—if you will let me, I will go to him now."

"He is at my house," Tolliver Radd said. "I brought him home with me."

Turning the horse about, he rode away. As he cleared the edge of the town, he suddenly, as if it were something he had forgotten, flung Tanner Bishop into the bushes at the side of the road.

Giving the ever ready Tempest his head, they thundered up the hill at a mad gallop. White locks streaming, beard flowing back over his shoulders, he took the wind in his face. This was exhilaration; this was joy; this was life! Tolliver Radd laughed aloud.

Fuzzy-Wuzzy

By JAMES W. BENNETT

KIPLING was right; that English bard has a way of being right, even when his generalities are the most glittering. The Fuzzy-wuzzy who attached himself to me, the moment I stepped off the boat at Port Sudan, was indeed "a first class fighting man". He fought with me for an hour in a heat which emasculated all descriptive adjectives.

"I be you' ga-eed, mastah!" he said grimly, over and over.

"But I don't want a guide. I don't need a guide."

"Ne'r mind, mastah, I be you' ga-eed! Ver-eee intersteeng thing. We take motocah. Ver-eee amusing, strange and intersteeng thing I will show you. I be you' ga-eed."

The conclusion was foregone. The crêpe rubber soles of my shoes were sizzling. The feet next to them were blistering. The thermometer in the comparative coolness of the hotel registered 132° Fahrenheit—and heaven alone knows to what heights it would have mounted in the sun! That curse of the white man in the tropics, prickly heat, was adding its torment. I struck my flag and surrendered to the Fuzzy-wuzzy.

He lifted a pair of skinny black arms, placed the tips of his two fingers in his mouth and whistled deafeningly. Out of

nowhere appeared a brother Fuzzy-wuzzy driving a Model T Ford, vintage of 1914. The car had no tires, just rims. Through the top, great patches of that brazen bowl, the sky, were painfully visible.

My "ga-eed" motioned me to take the more uncomfortable rear seat, while he perched himself beside his twin at the wheel. With a jerk, a rattle and a roar we bounded off. Our gait was precisely that of those camels which roamed the lanes about us. Once we grazed a camel. It took a nip at me but misjudged our speed, which was all of eight miles an hour—and too fast at that, in view of our missing tires. The reason for that lack was plain—the tires had melted!

With that same grimness which had so impressed Kipling, the guide turned to me and said—

"Once I was ga-eed for you' f'mous Mark Twain, and I show him this vereee amusing, strange and intersteeng thing I take you to."

I groaned. From Peking to Paris, members of this confraternity had always guided Mark Twain. Even boys fourteen years old claimed that distinction. Once in Cairo, ten dragomen in rapid succession, each claimed that he had been sole dragoman to that globe-trotting humorist.

The Fuzzy-wuzzy waved a hand toward an extraordinarily dilapidated collection of huts and announced—

"Down that street are bad women. We no go dere."

"All right," I muttered. "We'll not go there."

"And down *that* street," he went on, "is only the bazaar. Jus' a lot of dirty Ar'bs. We no go dere."

"No," I repeated, paying strict attention to my prickly heat, "we no go dere." He had *me* talking pidgin-English now, but I was too hot to care.

We left Port Sudan behind, its wharfs on the Red Sea, the railhead for the Nile Valley road, its one hotel and cluster of trim English bungalows, its dreary, dreary native settlement. Here was desert. Sand—and more sand. Treeless, shrubless, a howling desolation under a furious and unpitying sun.

The thought crossed my mind that these two ga-eeds might be bent on some queer business, such as slitting a foreigner's throat for his pocketbook. The German first officer of our ship had kindly passed out a few warnings of this nature before landing—but I had labeled his words as a bit of anti-British propaganda. Now I wasn't so sure of my label.

Finally I dismissed even danger from my mind as being a heat-producing thought. I was in that demoralized state where I felt that I would almost welcome surcease from that blasted, itching prickly heat at any cost.

I closed my eyes. On and on we rode. Then the Ford stopped. Stopped with a terrific grinding of brakes. I grasped the front of the seat before me, just in time to avoid being shunted to the floor of the car. Also I opened my eyes.

No, we hadn't come to a stop to avoid bumping a camel. In fact the two ruts stretching ahead of us in the sand—which constituted the road—were completely unobstructed. I looked at the ga-eed. For the first time, his dour face had changed. Now he was smiling. It appeared evil to me, that smile. I cast a vote against it.

"This," he said, "is most intersteeng sight in Port Sudan. Ver-eee amusing, strange and intersteeng."

The Fuzzy-wuzzy was right. He was absolutely right. Before me lay the shimmering desert, stretching inland to infinity, still without tree, shrub or blade of grass. But in the foreground was man's puny but indomitable challenge to this illimitable waste, a blistered wooden sign which read:

"Port Sudan Golf Club. First Tee."

Four hundred yards away, across the billows of sand, flew a gay white banner, as debonair as a lancer's pennon—the flag of the first green.

Extra Fare

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

HE WAS the picture of leisure in its broadest sense, this roundhouse foreman. His figure represented a rather thick letter V. His stout upper part rested squarely against the tall back of his tilted swivel chair, and his feet and legs ran up the other way to where his heels were planted firmly on the top of his scarred and littered desk. A swift breeze off the lake brought a few more layers of dust through the open windows to find lodgment on the soiled and yellow papers which were weighted down with tie spikes and telegraph insulators, nuts and bolts and other stray railroad equipment.

They called him Smitty.

There was nothing about Smitty or his office to indicate that he ruled over the mechanical destinies of this great Eastern terminal of two thousand miles of railroad main line. He carried his responsibility lightly, and he had good reason. He was now engaged in turning over, idly, the pages of the *Morning Globe*. Not that he expected to find anything of interest. But Smitty had nothing else to absorb him, and he was a man who liked to be absorbed.

His small, round eyes rested, momentarily, on column-long tables set in agate type. He was about to snort in disgust at the tabulations of stock gains and losses when a headline, at the top of the seventh column, caught his glance. He read the heading, sucked a little harder on his dead pipe, and then followed down into the eight-point type. A chuckle finally came from his thick lips and then, as heavy footsteps sounded and a shadow crossed his sheet, he looked up.

"Must be funny," Mike Mogridge, the division's senior engineer, said sourly, and laid down a ticket that contained the ailments of a passenger engine he had just brought in from the road. Mike had sweat stains on his soiled overalls and a goodly coating of engine grime on his leathery face and gnarled old hands. "If it's a laugh, I need it, considerin' what I just been through."

"Well," Smitty drawled, "it strikes me as funny. Here, take a look. Git your mind off your troubles."

"Troubles is all I got," Mr. Mogridge mourned, his fingers reaching for the paper, but his clear, pale eyes fastened on the rotund Mr. Smith. "You know how late I brought the varnish into town this mornin'?"

"Late enough, I guess," Smitty said. "But look. Read it. Maybe you'll see more trouble. Me, I don't give a hoot. I got a farm to go to, I have."

At this speech Mike Mogridge gave a little start. His eyes left the face of the foreman and dropped to the type. He read the third of a column once, failed to chuckle, then read it again.

"His name's Reginald, Mike," Smitty said.

"Yeh, I see that."

"Reginald V. Ballentine."

"Well," Mike demanded, "where do I laugh?"

There was a droop to his shoulders, something of spiritlessness. He was sixty-two years old, and he'd seen a great deal of railroading on the old Wisconsin Western from the right hand side of an engine cab. He'd seen a once great system drop down the scale of time to a vaudeville joke. The "Weary Willie".

"Right there," Smitty said as Mike raised his pale eyes. "Get it, Mike. Reginald V. Ballentine, from the East. A guy with a name like that—he wouldn't come from nowheres else. Leavin' a job as general manager of one of them big Eastern pikes to come out here as our president. Reggie!"

Again the foreman chuckled, applied a match to his pipe, puffed a bit, then spat toward the cracked spittoon in the corner.

"Yeh," Mike said, "I guess that is kinda funny. Maybe he's a young squirt an' got ideas. It says in the paper he started his railroadin' as a fireman, an' come on up. But Reggie ain't much of a name for a fireman, Smitty."

"You know what my hunch is, Mike? I bet he's got a hanky stuck up his sleeve. An' somebody, heaven only knows who, got him to come out here to see if he could save this gawdfersaken pike from the scrap heap."

"Save it from the Big Pacific, you mean," Mike Mogridge said listlessly. "The Big Pacific's gettin' us right where it wants us, Smitty. I've seen it comin' for ten years. I ain't wise to this financial doin', but I been told. The Big P wants to see ol' Weary Willie slide right off the stock board, an' go under the hammer, an' then it'll step in an' take us over. An', Smitty, we was a great railroad before the Big P had a hunnerd miles of track."

"I got my farm," Smitty said complacently. "I ain't expectin' us to hold out much longer, with all due regards to Reginald an' whatever he's likely to do."

"He ain't likely to work any miracle," Mike grieved. "An' a miracle—well, if he's one of them Easterners with a big head, an' a pair of spats—"

It was then that Mike Mogridge and Smitty turned in unison to see the figure in the door. They saw a tall, gaunt man in ill-fitting serge and scuffed shoes. They saw the suggestion of angular squareness from the straight brows to the jaws and the shoulders, and then down to the hands and fingers.

"Yes, sir," Smitty drawled. "What'll it be for you?"

"The roundhouse foreman—" The stranger's voice was deep, a rolling bass with a suggestion of quiet power. "I was wondering if you might need any machinists."

"I need 'em, brother," Smitty replied, looking over the gaunt form. "I need 'em, but I'd like to see me get 'em."

"Good machinists, yeh," Mike Mogridge put in. "If we had a good machinist somewhere, I wouldn't come into town on a passenger engine with a leak in every joint an' try to make a schedule."

"Short handed?" the gaunt, gray man asked, looking from one to the other.

"Well," Smitty drawled in reply, "you see, these is hard times, brother. An' this here's a hard luck pike. We're railroadin', yeh, but we're only makin' motions. We're all just kinda sittin' back, waitin'."

"For a change? I heard you mention something about a new president just as I was about to come in."

"Change? Naw." Smitty hesitated long enough to tamp some tobacco in his pipe and light a match. "We got—" puff— "a new—" puff—"president. What we need's a few bucks to spend, an' a magician. Naw, we're waitin' for the ax. Sorry. Maybe over at the Big Pacific roundhouse, now. You can see it across the way there. Through the window. You go over there an' you might find somethin'."

"Thanks."

They watched the gaunt, gray man turn slowly and wander out across the turntable pit.

"You should'a' sent him to see Reggie," Mike said, taking up his greasy gloves. "Poor devil. We got a hunnerd men laid off right in this terminal."

"You mentioned a miracle, Mike. That hundred an' more shop an' roundhouse men need a miracle right now to keep 'em eatin'. But miracles—I dunno."

THERE was something of a grim tenseness in the mahogany surroundings of that large room in the shadow of the district they call the Loop, there in that big city on the lake. Reginald V. Ballentine, the new president of the Wisconsin Western, stood in front of his polished desk. There was a suggestion of unquenchable fire in the gray-brown of his eyes. The gaunt squareness of his shoulders was not hidden by the comfortable hug of the pepper-and-salt tweeds that now had taken place of the ill-fitting serge in which he had draped himself for that long tour of two thousand miles of main and branch lines to get a first hand look at this job.

There was fight in the jaw that was now clamped tight over the frayed end of his dead cigar. From the gray shock of his hair to the square toes of his shoes, a subtle power emanated from his being and seemed to set ill at ease those two men who faced him.

His straight lips presently broke into a grim smile.

"Those men," he said in the same deep voice that Mike Mogridge and Smitty, the North Yard roundhouse foreman, had heard, "are good men. They're all good men. They've got no spirit. They're down at the heels and dead on their feet." He was discussing Smitty and Mike, and he was talking to the vice-president in charge of traffic, and to the general manager. "You gentlemen know why."

The general manager, portly and vastly important, squirmed a little, it seemed, as the gray-brown eyes fixed upon him.

"With all due regard to your predecessor, Mr. Ballentine," the general manager said, "I think—"

"My predecessor!" Reginald Ballentine broke in. "Let him rest in peace. No post-mortems. This is no bridge game. It's a railroad—although you'd never believe it if you went over it like I did. Not on the rear platform of a private car. No, by damn! Too many private cars and pomp. Private cars'll go in the shops for awhile from now on. You two—you haven't been close to the men who've got to do the job on the line."

"Well, in the traffic department," the slender vice-president offered, "I've tried to keep my men in hand, you know. I've given them every pointer, every lead. They've gone after business, but the operating department—"

"The operating department," Mr. Ballentine said, taking the words from the slim, well manicured vice-president's lips, "hasn't been able to deliver the goods. I know. I've heard traffic men talk before. That's old stuff. Older than the wheeziest engine we got on the line. Forget it. You get the business; from now on I'll show you what the operating department can do."

"We'll do our best."

"You'll do your best, and if that isn't good enough, you'll ramble. Just like the vice-president in charge of operations has rambled. I suggested something and he said, 'We can't'. There, gentlemen, on my desk, is his resignation now. The ink's barely dry. That's one man who won't be replaced. His salary was fourteen thousand a year. That money's going somewhere where it'll do some good."

The bite in that quiet, powerful tone was merciless, and Reginald Ballentine saw two high officials squirm more and more under his glare. The president turned to his desk and picked up a piece of paper. He looked at it for a moment, then sharply glanced up and fixed the slim vice-president in charge of traffic with his gaze.

"You, Keenan," he said, "just a moment ago said you kept your men informed. You gave 'em leads. Just how well informed are you?"

Mr. Keenan appeared more and more uncomfortable. He flicked ashes from his cigaret with a dainty gesture of his little finger, then began—

"Well, in freight and passenger matters I try to keep up—"

"You try! But do you try enough? Wait. Here's something. Do you know that the Big Pacific, right now, is inaugurating two extra fare trains between Chicago and the Coast? One East and one West?"

"Well, no, I can't say that I do. I haven't heard any rumors."

"I know." President Ballentine raised his voice for the first time, and Mr. Keenan winced. "Effective on the twenty-fifth of this month, gentlemen, the Big P will start this service. How do I know? I've got a job. A rotten job to do. But I took it because—well, you wouldn't understand."

He could have gone into the details at length. He could have told those officials, for instance, that the chairman of the board of the Wisconsin Western had come to him, begging, after it had been discovered that the then incumbent of the president's office was playing into the Big P's hands. He could have told them that he'd risen to that job he had in the East only because he could fight to the last ditch. But Reginald Ballentine was not a man to point to himself. He went on:

"It's my job, gentlemen, to know what our competitors are doing. There're ways of finding out. There's no secret in the fact that the Big P wants this property—after we're too weak to fight. Those two men at North Yard roundhouse were talking about it. They're all talking about it."

Ballentine paused and looked at his paper again. Then:

"Would you, Mr. Keenan, say that it was possible for the Wisconsin Western to go the Big P one better on service to the Coast? Passenger service?"

"Well, er—a-ahem. I'd like to know the time, for instance."

"All right. The present schedule on their best train. You know that."

"Yes. The same as on ours. Sixty-one and one half hours."

"Correct. These new jobs. They'll be fifty-eight hours flat. They'll have all the extras. Stock ticker, barber, bath, train secretaries, radio, maids. You know. Extra fare on the guaranteed time. These trains'll be announced in a national newspaper and magazine advertising campaign on the fifteenth. The Big P's press agent's got every newspaper in the country flooded right now with free copy, waiting for release."

Mr. Keenan sat very erect. He resembled a man who has just received a nice slap in the face. Mr. Ballentine appeared not to notice.

"What's that mean to you two?" Ballentine asked sharply.

"It means," the vice-president in charge of traffic lamented, his eyes on the blue spiral of flame from his monogrammed cigaret tip, "that—well, it looks like the Big P is about to ruin our passenger business, such as we have."

"It wouldn't occur to either of you, I suppose," Ballentine said caustically, "that the W. W. could equal or better that time with just as fine a train."

"If we had the money," the general manager said now, his voice rather tight and strained, "we could take a shot at it. That's fast time, though, and we've got the longer mileage. Maybe we—"

"There's no maybe about it!" the president snapped. "We don't have money. We have the longer mileage. We have no press agent. We can't print a lot of fancy literature with four colors unless we get the money to pay the printer with. But, gentlemen, this is a battle. A fair battle, if you will. We're diving into it with everything we've got. And we've got railroad men who need spirit. They need something to fight for. I'm giving 'em that."

Ballentine turned abruptly. He walked around his desk, and a pencil of sunlight, filtering through the somber hangings at the tall windows, touched his gray mane. The blunt ends of the square fingers dipped into his vest pocket, brought out a thick gold watch with heavy black figures on the dial. It was an operating man's watch, the one that Reginald Ballentine had carried in the days when those fingers had rested on a throttle bar or jerked a whistle cord for a wildcat wail.

"Gentlemen," he said, more quietly now, and totally unconscious that, in his words, one of the greatest dramas of railroading for all time, was in the making, "gentlemen, at 4:01 on the afternoon of the twentieth of this month, a train

will move westward from our central passenger station here. The name of that train will be the *Shoshone*. It'll have the last word in extra fare equipment, and it'll run without extra fare from the traveler."

As he paused to study those two officials, he saw them lean forward. He saw their jaws become loose. He didn't miss the clouded eyes, the sense of amazement. Then he continued:

"On the same day, eastward from Seattle, we'll start another train. A sister train, if you please. It'll be called the *Iroquois*. The time, gentlemen, will be fifty-three hours. We'll shoot the works, and we'll make it, or we'll tear up every rail from here to the Seattle waterfront."

For a full minute that mahogany room was deathly still. It was the general manager who first found his tongue. He got to his feet with a jerk, marched forward, thrust out his hand.

"We'll shoot the works," he echoed, and Ballentine knew that, henceforth, a word to that general manager would be enough.

Then vice-president Keenan seemed to have caught the spirit of fight. He raised himself to his slender height and said:

"You say the word. I'm in the battle now."

THERE is a chapter of railroad history in the West that will never be written because, aside from Reginald Ballentine and a handful of high officials, the inside facts were revealed to no others. His memorable conference with the vice-president and the general manager was held on the first day of the month.

On the afternoon of the third, the general manager was locked in a hotel ballroom up in North Dakota with every division engineer, superintendent, master mechanic, road master and maintenance boss. What the general manager said was perhaps short and sweet, because the meeting lasted less than an hour. By midnight of the fifth every roundhouse and shop was humming with industry. The road's best passenger engines were being worked on under cover of night and behind the drawn roll doors of the roundhouse shops. The track gangs were working in twelve-hour shifts under the personal supervision of the roadmasters.

It was on the night of the fifth, too, that five yard engines on the City Belt puffed across the W. W. interchange tracks with sixty-four steel Pullmans, and delivered the equipment at the North Yard coach tracks. That was one time that Shoot-the-Works Ballentine, as the W. W. president thereafter was to be known, was grateful for the depression. All that Pullman stuff had been available at the coach yards of his old Eastern road because the extra fare business between Chicago and New York wasn't what it once had been. That the sixty-four cars represented a friendly loan, no one knew, and none asked.

Behind his desk Shoot-the-Works Ballentine poured figures from beneath his gray mane to sheets of yellow paper. He ran two telephones hot, and the glint of battle never left his eyes. When the North Yard yardmaster called up, at eleven o'clock, as per instructions, to say that the coaches had arrived, Ballentine ordered two extras West to take half the cars to the Coast.

By midafternoon of the sixth the new time-table, under Ballentine's supervision, was rushed to the printers. And it was just as the grim, square jawed warrior was reaching for his tenth cigar that his door opened noiselessly and his secretary announced:

"Mr. Mogridge, sir. That engineer you sent for."

"Oh, yeh," Ballentine said with his slight smile. "Bring him in."

Mike Mogridge, freshly shaved and dressed in his Sunday best, made the start at the door all right. But once just inside he looked as if he wanted to turn and run. He saw the gaunt frame in the wrinkled tweeds, the intense gray-brown eyes and, as if instinctively, his big hand reached for the door. He gulped twice and swallowed hard.

"It's all right, Mogridge," Ballentine said quietly. "Here. Smoke?" And Mike Mogridge, through a mental daze, saw the president reach out with a box of cigars. "Have that seat."

"Why—uh-uh—"

"That's all right," Ballentine said. "No apologies. How did you know, or how could you know, that day in the roundhouse, who I was? Light?"

The square hand held out a match and Mike seemed to have trouble puffing.

"There. All right?"

"I—I guess I got kinda rattled," Mike finally got out. "You know, not expectin' to meet this way, an' then me—bein' summoned to see a Mr. Kelly."

"My secretary," Ballentine explained.

"Well, it's all kinda knocked my wheels loose under me, I guess."

"I know. You expected to see spats," Ballentine said with that hint of a smile. "And maybe a derby. Oh, I heard what you said in the roundhouse. But no matter—I sent for you because you're the senior engineer on the First Division."

"Yes, sir."

"You're qualified all the way from here to Custer. Three hundred and twenty-six miles."

"Yes, sir."

"You know our passenger engines and just what they'll do."

"Them's good engines," Mike said. "I know 'em."

"How fast have you ever let them out?"

"Well, the speed limit on the time card—"

"I know. Fifty-five miles an hour. I'm asking you how fast you've ever run."

"From Laclede to Schooler—" Mike replied, a deep red mounting the tan parchment of his features.

"Yes. Twenty-eight miles," Ballentine shot. "I know. How fast?"

"Twenty minutes," Mike blurted. He seemed highly embarrassed.

"Eighty-four miles an hour," Ballentine said after a moment of calculation. "Was she wide open?"

"No, sir."

"Suffer any from that speed?"

"None that I could see. I had eight steel coaches."

"You could've gone faster in a pinch."

"I could've, yes, sir."

"You'll have a chance—soon. And, Mogridge, if I hadn't been sure that you're the type that can keep a tight mouth, I wouldn't have sent for you."

"Uh—uh, well, you see—"

"You're all right, Mogridge. I just wanted to be a little closer to the ground Tight mouth, see?"

"Yes, sir."

"Here. Take another cigar. That's all."

And that next morning, as Mike got ready for the West, he paused in the roundhouse office to get some time slip blanks. His mind was still greatly in a whirl. He found Smitty with his feet on the desk and the paper in his hands.

"It's got me beat," Smitty drawled, looking up. "It sure has."

"What?" Mike asked as he picked up a handful of blanks.

"All this funny business since Reggie came to town."

Mike started. His eyes narrowed a trifle. He wanted to say that Reggie was all right, but his long upper lip remained a straight line.

"You know what's the latest, Mike?"

"What?"

"Bronze paint. Or maybe it's red. I dunno. It's for them three passenger engines we're workin' over. You know what I bet? I bet this Reggie's fixin' to put baby blue curtains in the day coaches. A guy with a name like that would."

THE first bomb exploded in Western railroad circles on the fifteenth of the month when the noon editions of the evening papers hit the street. A boy rushed an armful of them into Mr. Ballentine's private suite, and the W. W's chief officer read the announcements with his grim old smile. The W. W. had extra paid position, right up front. "The *Shoshone*—the extra fine train without the extra fare." It was all there, even as Ballentine's facile pen had written it out. The schedule: "Leaving Chicago at 4:01 P. M, the 20th; arriving at Seattle at 7:01 P. M, the 22nd." Fifty-three hours to the minute when you figured the changes from Central to Mountain, and from Mountain to Pacific time.

And, in the same editions, just a few pages removed, the Big P's page copy: "The West's Finest and Fastest. You can travel from Chicago to Seattle now

—in fifty-eight hours!"

When he had read the W. W's advertisement at least ten times, and compared it with the Big P's page, Reginald V. Ballentine gave forth a pardonable chuckle. Oh, he knew. All this time that gang over in the Big P's executive headquarters, but three blocks away, had probably been laughing up their smug sleeves at this raw tenderfoot from the big system of the East trying to do something with a starving pike like the Weary Willie. Reginald Ballentine was willing to bet hard cash now—some of that cash that he had left after he'd paid out of his own pocket the *Shoshone's* advertising costs—that there were a couple of headaches not so far away.

And, had he wagered, he would have won. The Big P's president was gasping for breath and the Big P's traffic chief was just about to collapse from an apoplectic fit.

And, in many other traffic offices throughout the Loop, there were broad smiles and hearty laughs. The general consensus of opinion could have been summed up thus:

"The Weary Willie. This Ballentine, whoever the hell he is, must be nuts. Why, they can't make it! They can't even make the sixty-one and a half hours they got now. The Big P, that outfit's probably pretty sore right now, but it'll get its laugh later."

Ballentine sensed all this. He didn't have to be told. How much was it the Big P had appropriated to advertise their new fast jobs? Two hundred and fifty thousand. Then there were the efforts of the well paid press agent. Mr. Ballentine took up a highly colored folder from his desk, studied the Big P's extravagant claims therein, tossed it aside.

Well, now he had the jump on the other boys by five full days. Weary Willie, eh? They'd all have another song to sing.

His smile suddenly left him and the grim mask settled over his square features. He wasn't kidding himself, not by a whole lot. He had to make that schedule or be laughed out of the West. Nothing—absolutely nothing must go wrong.

THE first thing to go wrong was the weather. The day of the twentieth didn't dawn. It just sort of broke behind a blanket of fog, and it took a long time to convince any one that it was really daylight. There were hopes in the W. W. offices that the fog would dissipate by noon. But, at that hour, the street lights in the Loop were on, automobiles ran with the aid of their dimmers, shooting jagged streaks of reflection through the puddles as they felt their way along.

Over at the W. W. passenger station the fog didn't seem to matter. What was happening there attested to the fact that Reginald V. Ballentine was no slouch when it came to doing a little press agenting of his own. Ever since nine o'clock, extra police had to hold the lines of people in check, for the desire to see this great curiosity on a railroad that had been a vaudeville joke was intense.

Reporters and camera men swarmed all over the place. The general manager and the vice-president in charge of traffic acted, on behalf of the road, as hosts. They answered questions. They and their staffs escorted crowds through the spotless Pullmans, explained the compact diner kitchen, demonstrated the various new gadgets in railroad equipment. Those who came to giggle were stilled in awe.

Promptly, at half past two, the gates to the train shed had to be closed. A national radio hook-up was set into motion, the microphones being placed at properly designated points so that a listening world could get a graphic picture of the inaugural exercises and the very starting of this new train to the West.

The announcers, when the time came, didn't mention that Reginald Ballentine paid for the radio hour from his own pocket. They probably knew nothing about it.

The crowd was noisy as the engine, its jacket gleaming under a coat of Indian bronze, backed through the switches and down to the waiting line of coaches. Ten thousand people gave out a great cheer. Mike Mogridge, squinting from his cab window, felt his heart beat faster. Then there came over him a vast sense of shakiness. In all

his years on the right-hand side he'd never seen anything like this. He dropped from his high, polished cab, found the general manager escorting him through the press of spectators. He looked about for a glimpse of the president, but he saw nothing save a blur of faces. He heard voices, loud and compelling above the crowd that had suddenly grown still—the voices of the announcers through the amplifiers.

He stood turning over a ball of greasy waste in his big hands while he listened to the Governor of one of the Western States, where the Shoshones had once ranged the vast spaces of mountains and valleys, make an eloquent speech. An Indian band from an Oklahoma school followed the Governor.

The vice-president in charge of traffic, an old master at luncheon clubs and business dinners, acted as toastmaster. The program, because it was in railroad hands, followed the click of railroad time precision in its execution.

At 3:50 the air brake test was made by the chief of air brake instruction who, for the moment, took Mike's place in the cab. No sooner had this been completed than a cry went up for a speech from Ballentine.

"The Weary Willie's new boss," somebody yelled. "Put him up!"

But an Indian girl came into the spotlight instead. A princess of the Shoshone blood. She was dressed in tribal costume as she came up to the pilot of the engine. Here the general manager took Mike by the arm, brought him forward. The girl turned to Mike, addressed him.

Mike will never be able to tell what she said. He did know that she made some sort of speech in a clear, low tone, and that she presently handed him a gold-plated emblem which he, in turn, had taken away from him by a mechanic who immediately bolted it to the smoke box front beneath the headlight.

Mike had to make his speech. It was all written out for him on a piece of paper, but Mike forgot to look at it. He got off, stammering:

"I-yuh—I—I—ah, it's proud I am, friends, I got the honor to jerk the latch —I mean to open the throttle—on this hot—this here fine passenger train—on an—on account of me bein' on the railroad for thirty-two years. I—" He broke and looked hopelessly about.

The general manager made motions toward the piece of paper. Mike looked at it, seemed aware of it for the first time. He mumbled a little more, stepped back red in the face and dry in the mouth.

Now a great stage star, the daughter of one of the West's most famous men, stepped up with a bottle of pale dry ginger ale decorated with a lot of pink silk ribbon. Mike tried to hear what she said as she smashed the bottle across the pilot beam, but he was trying to get back to his cab. A newspaper reporter and a photographer stopped him. Light flared white in his worried face. He climbed to his throttle, and the representatives of the press followed him, made him pose with his hand on the throttle.

Finally, when the reporter finished, he dropped off on the far side of the cab away from the ceremonies. An overalled figure squatted there on the edge of a tie, goggles down over his eyes, square shoulders slightly drooped.

The reporter said—

"Mister, it's a hell of a fine show, but where's the big works?"

"The what?"

"The guy that started all this. What's his name? Vannentine?"

"Oh," the gaunt man said, "you're a newspaper reporter. Being a reporter, you would get the name wrong. Not Vannentine; Ballentine. You'll have to look somewhere else." And the big works of the pike, disguised in overalls and goggles, smiled behind his dead cigar.

Reginald Ballentine looked at his watch. He straightened, threw his shoulders back. Beneath the faded blue of his overall bib his heart swelled with pardonable pride. He had witnessed all this from the sidelines, as one of his lowliest mechanics might, and he was satisfied. So far, so good. But there was still a long way to go. Two thousand miles.

The president climbed to the cab. Mike was comparing watches with the conductor. Outside, the newsreel equipment was lined up for the start of the run. The announcers were saying some-

thing about the conductor going back along the train. Ballentine crowded into the fireman's gangway with Mike.

"Highball," said Ballentine. The conductor's arm was high, and now it came down with a magnificent sweep.

From the brass throat of the high-wheeler, two barks sounded against the fog. The newsreel sound equipment and the radio picked up the whistle. Then came the deep bellow in the stack, the snort of power as Mike Mogridge, getting the greatest thrill of his railroad career, eased steam to the cylinders through the opened throttle valve. It was 4:01 P. M. The *Shoshone* was on its way.

Ballentine remained crouched in the right hand gangway, his head far out. He, with Mike, watched the curving net of rails that was the terminal yard. He spotted the green eye at the signal tower that told them the way was clear.

"Green," Mike shouted, and Ballentine repeated it in tense echo.

Behind them they heard the cheers of the mob, the wild calls. Railroading, up to then, had seen nothing like it. Deep in the plush a capacity crowd of passengers settled down, eyes gleaming, hearts pounding with the excitement of the moment. Arms waved from open windows. Men's hands. Women's kerchiefs. Some ran alongside as the rear cars curved from the platform.

There came the vibrant roll of wheels as the train ran beside stored cars in yard tracks; the clatter of switchpoints; the blowing of shop and roundhouse whistles which was augmented by the screams from the yard engines. Tumult and yells and wild waving. Ballentine saw it with grim eyes that somehow became bright and glistening. His was the feeling that a general has when new enthusiasm is born in his troops on the line.

Finally the open country, the main line straightening out. The throttle came back on the quadrant, the exhaust became a booming bellow in the squat stack as Mike Mogridge settled down for the dizzy pace.

The bronze streak, the great *Shoshone*, plunged in a seething fury at the darkening veil of murk. Proud as the tribal name it bore, fleet of wheel as its ancient ancestor had been fleet of foot, it drummed out its savage cadence at the greatest enemy of speed on land, or sea, or in the air—the unrelenting fog.

Station by station, the *Shoshone* ate up the miles, and regardless of the weather and the murk, there were always cheering crowds, lanterns waving from sidings, the blast of whistles.

Ballentine's eyes were bright flame behind his old goggles. He was back more than twenty years—a long way back—with the world thundering about him.

"On time!" became a ringing cry across the cab as engineman, fireman and chief officer compared watch and time card when each scheduled point was passed.

A square hand put an awkward pat on the old hoghead's back, and Mike nodded as Ballentine, with a ringing cry of victory, yelled:

"At it, Mike. Shoot the works."

IT CAME with breath taking suddenness not twenty minutes after the *Shoshone* had run out of the fog.

"Yellow!"

Even as he called the signal indication that loomed before him, Mike was closing his throttle and swinging on his air. Ballentine checked, braced himself and verified the caution light.

"Got her, Mike?" he asked from tense lips as he tried to gage the swiftly decreasing speed.

"I got her," Mike bawled, and the headlight picked out the cause of the red eye which now burned commandingly imperative, from the mast at Schooler tower. The white glare spread over the rust-red of a line of freight cars directly in the *Shoshone's* path.

Schooler Tower was an interlocking plant, operated jointly by the Big P and the W. W. Here both main lines crossed at acute angles, the W. W. running due east and west, and the Big P from the southeast to the northwest. And there, across the W. W.'s main, a Big P freight drag was tying up the works.

No sooner had the *Shoshone's* engine stopped than Ballentine was running along the gravel. Behind him Mike Mogridge followed, grunting curses.

Both knew that by the rules the operator at that tower was to permit no freight train of either line to enter the plant within twenty minutes before a passenger train was due.

They reached the freight, looked in both directions, then crawled through between two cars. Off to their left in the direction of the Big P engine, heading northwest, they saw lanterns. Toward these they headed.

"What the hell you got here?" Ballentine demanded as he came, panting, to the group of Big P trainmen. But he did not need their answer. The drag, a hundred cars long, had broken in two, and one car was off the railroad.

"We got a picnic," the Big P conductor snarled sarcastically. "Wanna play?"

Ballentine seized the man's shoulder, whirled him about. He said:

"You can pass the comedy. We've got a passenger train that's going through. We're moving you off the interlock."

"What's this?" A man whom Ballentine hadn't noticed now stood up. "You're goin' to do what?"

"You heard me. Give me your brakemen."

"Just a minute here, hoghead." The man approached belligerently. "I happen to be the train master of this division. I'll say whether a Weary Willie cinder eater can come up an' say—"

"I said I want your brakemen. I'm moving a passenger train."

"To hell with 'em, Mr. Ballentine!" Mike said. "We'll move these cars or we'll plow through 'em."

"Ballentine?" The trainmaster looked closer. "Not Reginald—"

"Yes."

"Well, say now—" the trainmaster opened his eyes wide—"if you want a brakeman—"

Ballentine got the men. He gave Mike instructions to break the Big P freight in two by pulling the pin and turning the angle cocks on the air hose. Then he raced up to the tower and delivered himself to a very pale operator.

"Call out your maintenance crew," he shouted. "We're tearing this plant wide open!"

"I gotta report you, mister," the operator cried.

"Report an' be damned," the president retorted. "Ballentine's the name."

Because the Big P, running from southeast to northwest at the intersection was on an ascending grade of .4 per cent, it wasn't hard for Ballentine to accomplish his strategy. The freight train was divided on the north side of the crossing, the air was bled off the twenty cars that were over the plant, and finally the twenty cars were allowed to roll back until the W. W. main was clear.

Ballentine, with Mike and the fireman, attacked the derail of the interlock, smashed it with coal pick and slice bar, spiked it down. Then they went back to the cab, and Mike whistled off just twenty-one minutes after his unfortunate stop.

As Mike opened up, Ballentine yelled at the Big P trainmaster.

"Tell your brass hats that it didn't work. That is, if they did this on purpose. Tell 'em to watch the *Shoshone* go to town."

To town the bronze streak went. Mike Mogridge had once run a passenger train between Schooler Tower and Laclede at a speed of eighty-four. Tonight he shaded the record. He made the twenty-eight miles at a ninety mile pace, and because he did that, under the president's urging, and maintained a breathless clip for a hundred miles beyond, he put the *Shoshone* into Custer, the division point, just fifteen seconds behind the card.

REGINALD BALLENTINE, that night, didn't know, when he left Custer with a fresh engine and a fresh crew, that over the length of his system his men were watching. He couldn't, from his point of vantage in a swaying cab, see the feverish eyes of section hands and telegraphers in lonely outposts, yard men, road men, trainmen and enginemen, to say nothing of office workers from Chicago to Seattle, clustered about the clicking brass of the telegraph, watching a railroad reborn. And those watchers, tensely eager, keeping an eye on the bronze streak's flight, didn't know exactly what was going on within them. Few of them knew that behind the throttle,

standing grimly silent, was the square being whom they once had jokingly called Reggie—a man they had never seen.

Where the news leaked out to the press Ballentine never knew. He rode through the night in North Dakota, saw the dawn break over the fastness of the plains. Then brilliant daylight, high noon, and still the dreary vastness wheeling back of him. But at each division point, with the crowds still cheering the *Shoshone* on its way, the battle cry of "On time!" rang out from leathery throats.

And out of the West the *Iroquois* was coming to meet them, battling the grades of the Rockies, swooping down on the farm lands of eastern Montana.

They met on the double track along the sinuous winding of the Yellow Water, with Montana's heights ahead of the *Shoshone* and safely behind its speeding sister. They met with a wild bellowing of whistles about ten o'clock at night, and Reginald Ballentine was at the throttle when they did. His square hand jerked down on the whistle cord for the far-flung greeting, and then Ballentine stepped back to his post on the deck, and the division hoghead whipped her westward.

No man has ever ridden so far in an engine at such a speed as Ballentine rode in those grim, battling hours. He saw the Montana Divide slip back of him at four o'clock in the morning. He grabbed a sandwich at noon in Idaho. He prepared himself for supper as the Cascades were left behind and only another hundred miles or so lay between him and the Pacific.

All the while the telegraph offices along the main line and the branches were crowded with anxious watchers.

It was at four o'clock, Pacific Standard time, on the second afternoon, the fiftieth hour of the run, that a bureau manager of a press association on the Coast got the tip to have all the cameras available ready to meet the train when it steamed in.

"President Ballentine aboard engine," the message said. "Don't let him get away."

The reporters and the cameramen, like the Northwest Mounted, got their man. They were hesitant at first as they saw the gaunt figure, caked with grime, slide down from the cab as the great *Shoshone* thundered in on time. It was exactly at 7:01 P.M.

Ballentine drew himself grimly alert, sought to fend them off, but there was no fending. Railroad history had been made, and Ballentine, despite his protests, had made it.

"Here," a photographer commanded. "Stand still there!"

The flashlights whitened the dimness of the train sheds. A mob came marching through the crowds, shouting—overalled men, like Ballentine himself.

"You rode from Chi?" one reporter asked incredulously.

"From Chicago," Ballentine snapped.

"Here," said another reporter. "They say you started on an engine. Come on. Talk. This is great, man!"

"I'll talk," Ballentine said directly. "I'll say that if there is credit to be given, it goes to this army of W. W. men. Every last one of 'em. They got an order. They had to fix tracks and overhaul engines. They didn't know what for. Then the crews, they had the time card and the train. They carried through. That's the place for credit. Here—" his big hand pulled at his engineer—"take his picture. Take all the rest of the crews. Mike Mogridge, who started this run. Not me."

He started to turn away, but he didn't get far. The overalled men, the advancing mob that, for the moment, had been stilled, closed in. They were his men—the terminal and road employees of the Coast. They tried to lift him to their shoulders, but he fought clear. Their cheers exploded thunderously in his ears—ears that still roared to the blasts of the dozen high-wheelers that had pulled him over the trail.

Suddenly Reginald V. Ballentine was a gaunt man in his advancing years, and very tired. How like the old days when he'd finished a sixteen-hour battle with a teakettle engine and a train of thirty cars! Now this was the end of that long road. The brightest coinage of success—the cheers of good men who looked upon him as their captain.

Ballentine allowed himself to be lifted and carried off on their shoulders.

Continuing

SCALAWAG

By GORDON YOUNG

The Story Thus Far:

CAPTAIN Bill Jones, of the trading schooner *Merry Maid,* felt that the planters and storekeepers of Tehuala Island needed a lesson. All of them owed him money, which they hoped to avoid paying. He was easy-going, but they failed to take into account his reckless spirit when aroused.

His first call was on the tricky Chinese merchant, Woo Lung, who owed him fifty dollars. In addition, Woo Lung had a pretty daughter named Lalee, who was in love with one of Bill's sailors. So Captain Bill told the Chinaman that if he would permit the girl to marry the young sailor, he would cancel the debt. But Woo Lung, who was scheming to sell the girl to a drunken planter, refused. Thereupon Captain Bill gave him a cuff over the ear and ordered him to have Lalee ready that evening, when his men would come for her.

Captain Bill then made another call—this time on the miserly Mr. Simpson, proprietor of Tehuala's largest store. Mr. Simpson was not pleased with his visitor; but Captain Bill made himself right at home, presently departing with a bag of gold pieces, rightfully his.

It being dinner time by now, Bill turned his steps in the direction of Cloverland's Hotel, where already the fashionables of the island were gathering to dine and dance.

Now Bill was not an overly fastidious man; nor was he the possessor of a savory reputation. So he was not surprised when Mr. Cloverland, himself, stopped him on the steps and told him he was not wanted. Bill agreeably allowed himself to be led away from the veranda, out under the trees. Then, unhurriedly, he knocked Mr. Cloverland down, took his pistol; and dressed himself up in Cloverland's expensive clothes.

But Bill was not to be suffered to dine in peace. This time it was a pretty, curly headed girl who drew him aside into the shadows. She told him that she was Jeanne Malloy—niece of a planter who owed Bill much money—told him that she must marry the pasty faced Mr. Pleu, unless Bill gave her passage to Nello Island, where she had relatives. And Bill, liking neither Malloy nor Pleu, welcomed the chance to disrupt their plans. Then he proceeded upstairs where the gentlemen in question sat at cards.

The players were disconcerted to see Bill, who lost no time in pleasantly assuring them that unless he were paid off immediately, he would break all their heads. But before this operation could be started, Cloverland, backed by the native law, charged up the stairs.

Bill swung into action; and planters and native policemen went down on all sides. Then Bill dived through a window on to the veranda roof. Below him, in the driveway, was a carriage and horses. Jeanne Malloy held the reins. He leaped to the ground, and she cried:

"Captain Bill? Captain Bill! Quick—get up here! Are you hurt?"

"I've been havin' a good time!" said Bill.

"BUT you are hurt and bleeding!" Jeanne Malloy cried.

"Get my head in a bucket o' salt water and I'll be all right."

"Can you drive?" She thrust the reins at him.

"Nothin' but men, miss."

"Then hold on to me. It will take both my hands to hold these horses. Let go, Tono—"

The groom jumped aside, scuttling away so that his part in this affair

would not be known. The horses leaped into the air and hit the traces with a jerk that slammed Bill against the back of the seat and threw the girl against him.

"Hold me!" she said almost angrily.

Her own arms were pulled straight out by the tug of the lines, and the light surrey rocked like a skiff in the surf as the frightened horses tore down the curve of the graveled roadway. Bill grabbed her, one arm about her waist, his other about the back of the seat.

Bill, in his time, had held to a storm whipped sail's leech with one hand while he dangled overboard on a bucking ship, but he didn't have any such sensation as in this careening surrey.

"Hold me!" Jeanne shouted again as she pitched sidelong, half out of the carriage; and Bill jerked her back, right up against him, locking both hands and bracing with his feet.

And so they went storming by, within a pea's throw of the hotel veranda, and the gaping faces that watched saw, or thought they saw, Captain Bill struggling with the girl. And not a thought entered into the head of any of the watchers except that Captain Bill was carrying off Jeanne Malloy. It was a confused, blurred glimpse they had of galloping horses and a rocking carriage; and Jeanne's cry of "Hold me!" sounded in their ears like "Help me!" The next instant the carriage was gone. For a moment or two the amazed listeners on the veranda could hear hoofs strike with splattering shock on the gravel and the whirring grind of the wheels.

It was a good two miles to the beach, and downgrade all the way. Bill thought that half the time the surrey was on two wheels, and the rest of the time it wasn't on any. Jeanne's curly hair streamed like a banner, and her small hands, wrapped about with the reins, grew numb and her arms as rigid as if frozen. The wheels sang angrily on the gravel, and the clatter of hoofs was like the crazy beat of drums. Now and then the dim shadows of natives walking along the roadway were scattered, as if thrown, into the deeper shadows of the jungle-like growth, and vague cries of wonder and amazement rang through the still night.

"You sure carry all sail!" said Bill, half admiringly.

"They're running away!" Jeanne gasped. "I can't—stop them!"

"They're runnin' in the right direction, anyhow," said Bill.

"Can you help me hold them?"

Bill reached his right arm farther around and under the back of the seat, so as to take hold of Jeanne's waist too, then he put his left hand out ahead of hers on the reins, and jerked and pulled. The frightened horses had tough mouths, and Bill wasn't a horseman. Jeanne unwrapped her benumbed hands and beat them together to bring back the blood. The smooth oiled leather pulled through Bill's grip, so that the horses had their heads. They came to where through the tall palms they could see the harbor's wavelets foamily whispering to the beach—and the horses left the road. The next instant a swirling turn brought a back wheel of the surrey against a palm bole, shattering it. The surrey dropped, half turning over, and Bill and the girl went out backward over the seat and landed with a sprawling jar on the soft, moist earth.

The horses raced on, more terrified than ever by the wreck of a carriage that ricocheted behind them, being banged into kindling wood by bumps against this tree and that.

"You hurt, miss?" said Bill anxiously, on his knees, bending over her.

Jeanne gasped. The breath was half gone from her body.

"I'm scared to death—they will catch us!"

"If you live till they do you'll be older than Methuselah's grandmother!" said Bill and, picking her up in his arms, he ran for the beach.

It was quite a distance up to where he had told the boat crew to wait for him; but the girl was light of weight and pleasant to carry. The shoes hurt his feet and he stumbled awkwardly, swearing.

"Oh, listen! Listen!" Jeanne said, stirring. Her ears were keener than his for sounds of pursuit. "I hear horses! They are coming—on horseback!"

"If my boat ain't on the beach, we'll swim for it!"

"Let me down so I can run!"

"All right; we'll try that," said Bill, letting her feet touch the ground and taking a hand to pull her along. "Come on!"

He hallooed and was answered from up the beach where the halfbreed, Harry, waited with the boat.

"That boy never failed me—" said Bill.

But horsemen had caught sight of them and were riding down through the grove.

Jeanne, trying to run, clutched at her skirts, pulling them up; but she stumbled, was jerked off her feet and half dragged.

"You carry too much sail on your lower masts!" said Captain Bill.

He caught her up again, swung her into his arms and jumped along with quick glances over his shoulder at the horsemen who had strung out through the grove and were yelling encouragement, one to another.

The excited boat crew, seeing a race was on, pushed the boat off the sand and held to the gunwales. They danced up and down in the water, yipping and jabbering. Some of the horsemen were near enough to call on Captain Bill to halt.

"Oh, run faster—faster!" Jeanne cried.

In two more jumps Captain Bill shouted—

"We're there!"

With a surging splash through the knee-deep water he brought up against the gunwale and dropped her heavily against a thwart as two or three of the leading horsemen came off the sand, splashing up to the boat. They cursed Bill; they called to Jeanne; they struck at the heads of the boat crew with the butt ends of whips, and damned the blacks.

The planters were used to having their own way with natives, bullying and whipping them. But they didn't know about Captain Bill's crew, who were as full of fight as a flock of gamecocks. The blacks cursed the horsemen and beat at them with oar blades. It was a noisy mixup, with oars flailing like clubs and jabbing like lances, with the boat rocking and frightened horses rearing. The ugly halfbreed, Harry, howled joyfully. He jabbed the boathook at a rider's breast; the rider reined up, jerking the horse's head high, and the horse, back on its hocks, slipped, plunged frantically and went down with a sidelong plunge, sousing the rider.

Bill stood on a rocking thwart and tusseled with a man on horseback who had ridden close and swung with the butt of his whip. The revolver had dropped from Captain Bill's pocket when the surrey went to smash, so there was nothing for it but fists and oars. Just as Bill sent a smashing blow into the rider's face, the blacks gave the boat a shove that sent it out into deeper water; and Bill lost his balance and fell down just as if he had received the blow. But, being down, he snatched an oar and began rowing.

There were guns among the horsemen, but they were afraid to shoot for fear of hitting the girl. The blacks, all a-babble with excitement, climbed in over the gunwales and dripped salt water on Jeanne, who lay in a huddle, staring anxiously; and in her heart a little fearful that she had not done the wise thing in running from even such a person as Pleu since she had come among such wild savages as these.

The boat was away. The blacks called tauntingly as they bent to their oars, and they were answered from the beach with curses and threats.

"They'll scurry about for canoes an' try to lay aboard us," said Bill. "They'll get a ship an' try to follow us to sea, but—" He lifted his head, gazing about at the cloudy night, sniffing. "I smell a blow. Nobody can catch that storm bird, the *Merry Maid,* once she gets to sea."

THE *Merry Maid* lay well out, a dark blob on the harbor, with the twinkle of standing lights in her rigging; and the blacks lay to their oars joyfully. They loved Captain Bill much as hunting dogs love a master.

"We got 'um other girl too, Cap'n!" said the halfbreed, Harry, loudly. "She make 'um fight. Big fight with jaw. Talk, talk, talk. Scratch 'um, pull hair, kick, say she no lub Charley, an' make much big row. My word *whau,* yes! Charley he damn fool lub 'er. Ugh!"

The other blacks laughed, clucking, saying *whau!*—agreeing with Harry that their friend Charley was much damn fool to love such a woman.

"What other girl?" asked Jeanne, with her teeth a-chatter from nervousness and the chill of splattered salt water; and a quick fear, a sudden distrust, seemed to put ice into her blood.

"One I bought from the chink for fifty dollars. Paid too much, I bet!"

"You bought a girl!"

"An' then had to steal her."

"I want to go back!" said Jeanne. "Please let me go back! I was crazy—crazy—to come with you!"

"Hold up!" said Captain Bill, and the rowers lay on their oars. "You want to go back to that beach? Do you, miss?"

"Would you take me back?"

"Say the word, an' back you go, miss. Right to the beach."

"Oh?"

"Come on. Speak up. We got to go one way or the other."

Jeanne gazed shoreward where the tall fronds loomed to the skyline and foamy wavelets lisped on the sandy beach. There were friends of Pleu and her uncle—perhaps Pleu and her uncle themselves. She trembled, chilled by fear and cold. In her woman's way she knew that if Captain Bill would so readily take her back he must not be the brute he seemed, and so she did not want to return; but if he had refused to take her back, then fearful anxieties would have swarmed into her thoughts, and she would have begged to be returned.

"You will take me to Nello?" she asked.

"That was the bargain."

"I want to go to Nello—"

"Give way!" said Captain Bill, and the oar blades struck water.

"But who—why that *other* girl?"

"That chink storekeeper's daughter."

"Oh, Lalee! You haven't stolen her!"

"You know 'er?"

"Of course I know her. She's one of the sweetest, prettiest girls on the island, and—oh, how could you!"

"Reports don't jibe," said Captain Bill. "I've never seen 'er, but Harry here—you heard 'im? A devil in calico! Got his handsome nose all scratched."

"What did you want to steal her for?" Jeanne was indignant and uneasy.

"I didn't. Purely business. Ol' Woo Lung owed me fifty dollars. I owe my boy Charley two hundred and fifty. So I—"

"You *are* a brute!"

"That's right. An' if I wasn't, you'd still be up at Cloverland's—wearin' Pleu's wedding ring that he takes off wives when they die, to give to another'n!"

Jeanne had nothing more to say. She bit her lips and shivered.

The boat ran in under the *Merry Maid's* bulwarks. A clatter of voices called from the deck and was answered with a babble that told of the fight and excitement on the beach.

"Up you go!" said Captain Bill and, bracing his feet on a thwart, he stooped, lifted Jeanne as he would a sack of potatoes, half raised and half tossed her up to reaching hands.

She made curious little sounds of fright and indignation. Her uncle had been cruel, Pleu was a nightmarish sort of person, but all her life she had been treated with a certain social dignity.

"Where's Lawton?" Captain Bill asked as he scrambled on board.

"Him fall off mast. Half break neck."

"The devil! I've told him to keep away from aloft." Captain Bill added a bundle of oaths that crackled like dry fagots. "Here, you, Kluckeroo!" That was as near as Captain Bill tried to come to the shaggy headed steward's honorable name. "Stow this girl in my cabin. Light the lantern. Get out some fresh blankets. Then get to hell away an' stay there."

He impatiently half pushed Jeanne toward the amazed bushy-head, who clucked and gaped, astounded. Already this night one woman had been stowed in a cabin aft and locked in.

Jeanne drew back with a gasp of fear. In the light of the lantern she had her first glimpse of the ugly faces of Captain Bill's crew. They looked to her like devils. She turned protestingly to Captain Bill, but he had gone. Already the boat crew, with grunt and heave and shout, were hauling up the boat. From the dimness forward she heard Captain Bill's voice with a kind of stormy good nature hurrying men with a flurry of

orders.

The ugly Kluckeroo bent near her, saying:

"You come 'longside me, missa. Me much good fella, you bet 'um. You come?"

Jeanne shuddered, chilled with salt water, chilled more by the presence of these dark, ugly shapes, and sudden apprehensiveness as to what she was in for on board this schooner. The smell of it was bad. She thought of her own clean, sweet room with lacy curtains fluttering in the draft of wide windows. She lingered, peering shoreward, wishing to heaven that she had never ventured to risk herself with this Captain Bill Jones, who didn't now seem quite as noble and romantic as when she had heard of him through the houseboy, Mike.

"You come, huh?" said Kluckeroo coaxingly, bending to her, putting out a hand but not touching her.

"I'll see it through," said Jeanne to herself.

Kluckeroo led the way, prancing down the dim stairs, turning to call encouragingly as Jeanne hovered reluctantly from step to step on the companion. They went down into a fair sized cabin that looked rough and bare, being meagerly furnished. There was a rack of rifles, glistening with oil; and to her that looked ominous. The black Kluckeroo opened a door, fiddled and scratched, lighted a lantern. Then, in haste, he tore the blankets off a bunk and pitched them out into the cabin. He brought others and, jabbering vaguely, spread them.

"You go now, yess'um missa," he said, pointing.

Jeanne went into the little room and drew the sliding door to. She groped and peered, looking for a lock. There was none. Anybody could come in, at any time. That frightened her. She looked about. It was a small room, half filled by a huge, ironbound sea chest. A small broken mirror was set into a bulkhead. There were gummy looking pipes racked near the head of the bunk, and their odor was strong. Near the head of the bunk also there was a belt and a big revolver in a flap holster. The floor was bare. She noticed that her wet clothes were torn and spotted with blood.

She sat down on the bunk, frowning and biting her lips, wanting to cry, yet too proud; but she muttered over and over:

"What a fool I was! What a fool!"

Overhead she could hear the running patter of feet, shouts, the creak, rattle and jar of shipwork. The schooner rocked and pitched. The port was closed. The air was hot and a most unpleasant smell seemed to make her head reel. Presently the shouts grew louder. There was the vague hail of far off voices and taunting answers; then the crackle of firearms.

A heavy banging struck on her door, and Captain Bill's voice—

"Miss Malloy?"

"Yes?" she answered doubtfully.

"Open up the door."

"It isn't locked."

"Can I talk to you a minute?"

"Why, yes."

Captain Bill sent the door back, and for a moment Jeanne scarcely recognized him. He had soused his head in a bucket of salt water. He had ripped off the coat and shirt, kicked off the shoes, and there he stood, bronzed and half naked.

"See here, miss. The whole town's swarmin' out in canoes an' boats for you. Our anchor's up an' jib set. No trouble at all to shoo 'em off. In another hour we'll be clear to sea an' into a hell of a storm before mornin'—or my nose don't smell right. But what I want to know before it's too late is, do you want to go on to Nello? It's your last chance to say yes or no."

Jeanne, who for a half hour had been shivering and wishing herself ashore, looked at Captain Bill. Half naked, bronzed and brawny, he appeared larger than in clothes. He looked half like a savage, but a sort of noble savage, alert and earnest.

And Jeanne, being a woman, gazed at him steadily, then said in a low voice:

"Why, of course I want to go! Whatever made you think I might change my mind?"

"Just wanted to make sure," he said. "Kick off them wet clothes, roll up in the blankets an' hang on tight."

With a sweep of his arm he sent the door to, and Jeanne was alone again—half wishing she had said she didn't want to go! She crouched near the door and opened it a crack's breadth, listening. The schooner was heaving so that she rocked drunkenly. She could hear Captain Bill's voice:

"Talk all you want an' say what you like, but another shot from any of you an' I'll open up! Keep off! When Pleu dies of a hard liver an' Malloy is hung for a rogue, I'll be back—an' the girl too. An' listen, you swabs, if the girl says she ever got a word or a look on this ship that wasn't right, I'll poke my head in a noose an' let niggers pull it! That's flat. So go to hell—I'm goin' to sea!"

Jeanne pushed the door shut and stood up, unsteady with the roll of the schooner. Somehow a great weight seemed to have rolled from her, and though she gasped and felt sick from the smell and stale air, she peered wanly into the broken mirror and smiled vaguely at herself. No doubt of it, Captain Bill was a devil—but a nice sort of devil.

In another hour Jeanne was the seasickest girl on the seven seas. She had been on ships, lots of them; but never before on a copra schooner, or any ship that rolled with such crisscross twists and plunging bucks. She lay on the bunk, grimly holding on, and wishing she had died in her cradle; but even at that she stubbornly refused to wish that she hadn't risked the venture of going to Nello with Captain Bill Jones.

CHAPTER IV

CHARLEY'S SECRET

ALL that night Captain Bill was on deck, and every moment of it he was strained and alert. None but the hardened trading captains who cared no more for a gale than for a squall would have gone to sea on such a night; and he took the rough harbor channel—which he knew better than he knew the lines of his palm—with all plain sail set, and his own heavy hands on the wheel. The glass was down, confirming his own nose; and if he could get into plenty of sea room he would be thankful for the storm, since bellowed threats from Malloy's friends had said they would take to sea, find and report him to the gunboat that was in the vicinity, and follow him to the ends of the earth. Let 'em try it on a dark and stormy night!

When well offshore Captain Bill was kept busy, but not too busy to revisit young Lawton, who had got a fall that jarred him up so badly that he was a long time unconscious. Captain Bill pawed him over for broken bones and warned him:

"There'd better not be nothin' more wrong with you than salts 'll cure. That's as far along as I've got in my medical studies."

Lawton said:

"I feel all right but for my back. It's got a twist or something. I can get up—"

"An' be more in the way than layin' here. Keep still. On deck you'll get washed overboard. An' in this sea I wouldn't jump after my grandmother. Besides, drownin's an easy death, so the old lady wouldn't suffer much!"

Also Captain Bill noticed that the young black seaman, Charley, was happy and cheerful, and so swore at him.

"You're a fine fellow to be in love, you are! Singin' an' hoppin' to be sailin' off from the little girl. Fickle, I call you. Come here—" he laid a hand on Charley's hair and pulled him close, sniffing his breath—"let me see if you've been drinkin'!"

"No, no, Cap'n, me no drink!" Which was true, but Captain Bill held him more tightly and demanded—

"Then what the hell you so happy about—on a night like this?"

Charley giggled and squirmed and said anxiously—

"Me an' you good friends, Cap'n, so—"

And Captain Bill made a guess:

"So you know the girl's on board, huh? Well, you marry her as soon as the wind goes down. An' if you've lied to me in sayin' she loves you, I'll—"

"Oh, she love me, Cap'n!" Charley gurgled.

An hour later, Captain Bill, staring

watchfully out into the stormy darkness, found the squat halfbreed Harry alongside, ready for any order; and Bill roared at him through the wind—

"Did Charley see you bring that girl on board?"

"No, Cap'n, him on shore that time."

"Then somebody's told him. He knows she here." Then, half to Harry, half to the wind, "Now I bet he won't wipe out what I owe 'im. I was goin' to make a bargain with 'im before I married 'em."

"Ugh," said Harry, shaking his head. "She helluva bad girl for to make wife, Cap'n. *Whau!* Talk, talk, talk. Scratch, bite, kick—ugh!"

"That'll be good for 'im."

Before dawn the wind came as if to blow off their toenails. The *Merry Maid* rocked to her beam's end, and lay channels under with the deck like a peaked roof and the wind beat and tugged till the stays whimpered under the strain. The ocean was flattened under the heavy weight of the wind, but spray flew about like the lashes of innumerable whips, burning where it struck the naked, tough bodies. Captain Bill held on. His rigging was sound, his sails strong. One reason he was always impoverished was because he poured money out to make and keep the *Merry Maid* seaworthy. It gave him pride to drive her at times when other men had to heave-to and peer anxiously aloft. He slapped the rail as if patting the schooner on the flanks, and shouted:

"Take it, take it all! That's the girl! Let 'er drive!"

Other men might love sunset seas and the twilight whispering of soft winds over quiet lagoons; but Captain Bill Jones got a joyful excitement out of a storm, just as out of a row. He stood long hours, watching, waiting, listening, and the hours passed like so many minutes, while his crew huddled in places of shelter, hanging on, chilled, disconsolate, but scarcely anxious, because they had a child-like faith in Captain Bill.

ALONG about the middle of the forenoon the wind fell a little and the seas came up; whereupon Captain Bill promptly shook out the reefs and sent the *Merry Maid* leaping at the big waves. Otherwise they would have caught and shook her and pounded her as if she were a cask adrift. Now she took the seas with lurching heaves that made the timbers groan as when a strong man heaves and grunts but doesn't mean to give in. Rolling from side to side, she climbed watery mountainsides, and jumped, shaking slippery feet off her deck so that skittering men dangled from rope ends and clawed at pin rails.

Captain Bill laughed at them, and they laughed back. They were hungry and tired. There was no lighting a fire in a galley; and Captain Bill, who usually drank a quart of black coffee in the morning, knew so well how they felt that he gave over his keys to Kluckeroo and had him fetch a bottle of gin. With tin cup in hand, Bill measured out a sip for all the men as they came scrambling up eagerly in line.

"That's breakfast an' dinner too!" said Captain Bill. Then he laughed as he said to himself, "I bet the girls have been prayin' we sink!"

There wasn't much left in the bottle when he got through with the ten men of the crew, so he drank the rest of it himself. Then he took hold of Charley's arm with:

"Come along, son. Let's go see if seasickness hasn't shaken all love out of the fair Lalee!"

Charley pulled back with a sort of wondering protest, trying to say something to which Captain Bill wouldn't listen.

"I'd be no good as a captain at all if I couldn't marry you on the high seas. An' married you'll be—if the girl's silly enough to want you! Serve you right for bein' a good lookin' boy."

They went like drunken men, rocking down the companionway as the schooner reeled with slanting plunges up, over and down the mighty waves. Captain Bill kept a firm grip on the protesting Charley, whom he thought bashful, and he wouldn't listen as the sailor jabbered.

"Here we are, son—"

Captain Bill threw off the padlock, shot the door back, pushed Charley in and started to follow.

Charley gave one loud shout of fright-

ened astonishment, then turned and with a sudden scrambling flurry that almost capsized Captain Bill as he bolted past him, made for the companionway as if running for his life.

Captain Bill peered into the room, then held the door and hung on, staring, blinking. No wonder Charley had bolted.

Within the room, sitting upright on the bunk and hanging on with a kind a stiff dignity, sat a gaunt, hatchet-faced woman with hair drawn tightly over her head and twisted into a corkscrew knot at the back. She was well on the wrinkled side of middle age, with a long nose, a scrawny neck, and a mouth as thin and tight as a slit in a leather bag; her eyes were gray and steady.

She gazed angrily and without fear at Captain Bill who, at that moment, looked as much like a ruffian as any man unhanged. He was naked from the waist; his tousled head was streaked with dried blood; his eyes were red with salt spray and sleeplessness, and his gaping astonishment did not increase his good looks.

"Well!" she snapped, and there was a metallic click of teeth and her mouth closed into as tight a line as if it were nothing but a scar.

"Where in hell did you come from? An' who the devil are you?"

"You miserable scoundrel, you! Why this outrage? You will be punished! Take me back at once! Why am I here?"

"God knows, I don't!" said Bill weakly.

"Don't you dare swear in my presence again! You hear me?"

"Yes'm," said Captain Bill. She had the voice and bearing that would have made worse men than Bill uneasy. "But there's been a—a—a mistake."

"Oh, a mistake, eh? I should hope so. A nice mistake indeed!"

"But who the—I mean, who are you?"

"Miss Lydia McKenzie, of Searsport, Maine, U.S.A. I arrived two days ago to replace the Rev. Mr. Thurmorton as the head of the mission on Tehuala. And you, you nefarious scoundrel, you! I have been well warned against the ungodly lawlessness of such men as you, but I never thought you would have the devilish daring to seize—"

"I ain't," said Bill humbly, shaking his head. "No'm. There's been an awful mistake. I don't want you."

"Then turn back and put me ashore at once."

"I can't," said Bill woefully. "I fixed things so I wouldn't dare go back. Now with havin' you they're worse'n ever!" Then brightly, "We're goin' to Nello. Them cannibals need missionaries worse'n anybody this side o' hell."

"No swearing, I told you!"

"An' you ain't the least bit seasick?" Bill asked regretfully.

She answered with scorn:

"No. Why should I be seasick, though this is a filthy ship! Such smells! I am used to rough water. My brother was a fisherman and I was often with him. But I do want fresh air."

"A lot of it up on deck, an' you're welcome."

"Then I'm not to be treated as a prisoner?"

"No'm."

"You know," she said critically, having scrutinized Bill's big, amazed face where honest puzzlement was stamped in all its lines of astonishment, "I begin to believe you did not mean to take me prisoner. But all night long I have been thinking that you and that wretched Chinaman—"

"Chinaman?"

"Yes. He sent for me to come and see his daughter. Wanted me to talk with her. He had me wait in a little back room. Then the first thing I knew there in the dim light I was seized by horrid savages and—"

Bill forgot his orders, and swore a blue streak. The crafty Woo Lung had put it over on him.

"An' now," he concluded dispiritedly, "I'll never get that fifty dollars unless I can catch that Chinaman on some other island."

"Oh, so you did mean to steal a poor helpless girl! I have heard of such outrages, but I never thought any ruffian would dare a thing like that where there was a mission. But you—you look like an evil scoundrel. And an American, too! Your country should be ashamed of you!"

Miss Lydia McKenzie said other things. Bill never had got such a tongue lashing. She spoke with a calm sort of wrath, sitting upright with dignity on the bunk of a bucking schooner, and she had no fear of him.

Bill tried to explain that he was merely honorably mixing a little business with a pure love affair. He didn't want the Chinaman's girl, no. He didn't steal girls—only blacks for plantation work.

Miss McKenzie distorted everything he said into its worst aspect, and condemned him severely; and Bill, uncomfortable as he was, was still enough of a simple and honest fellow to have a reluctant admiration for her utter lack of fear.

"Now," concluded Miss McKenzie, lifting her head a bit higher and giving him a look, "I want fresh water for my toilette. I want my coffee. I want oilskins so that I may come on deck."

"Yes'm," said Bill, jumping at any sort of chance to get away from her.

He backed out of the room, shutting the door, and breathed like a man who had just escaped from a lion's den. His blasphemous soliloquy ended with—

"My God, what am I goin' to do with 'er?"

Bill went on deck, fully prepared to give his halfbreed mate the devil for having been such a chump as to kidnap a sour-apple-faced missionary when supposed to carry off the flower-like Lalee.

Bill jumped out on deck and looked about for Harry. Then, once again that morning, Captain Bill blinked and stared as if not trusting his eyes, and oaths unconsciously rippled over his lips.

There coming toward him over the uneven deck were Charley, Harry and Kluckeroo, followed by one or two of the other boys, and they seemed to be tenderly dragging a half dead little flower of a girl. Her neck hung as if broken and her long dark hair fell about her, and she sagged in their arms. Her bright calico garment was in disarray.

"Women! Another'n!" Bill gasped in dismay. "I've turned Turk or somethin'!"

With two jumps and a bound he stood before the boys, talking fast and most of it unprintable. The half dead, childlike little girl lifted her lusterless, frightened, seasick eyes, and Bill's anger oozed away. This was the Chinaman's pretty daughter.

Charley anxiously explained:

"Me an' Lalee, we make runaway to ship las' night. She hide down forepeak till island he be far away. Very much bad. Make Lalee belly topside down, Cap'n Bill."

Charley groaned in a sympathetic pantomime of seasickness.

"You didn't steal 'er?" demanded Captain Bill with sudden righteousness.

"No, no; oh, no. We make runaway for lub."

"She looks in love! Hellablazes! Why'd you poke a girl like that down in the dirty forepeak! Make a fish seasick. Lalee? Lalee! Did you come away of your own will with this cockeyed son of a turtle?"

To natives, there was no more offensive an epithet than being called a son of a turtle. Captain Bill's crew didn't care what he called them; but Lalee, even half dead, was stung by the insult. She jerked up her head and with a bright sparkle of temper and in very good English, quaintly accented, said:

"Charley a fine boy and a long time we have love. My father want make me marry ol' ugly man. I come last night with Charley, an'—oh—!"

Seasickness welled upon her.

Captain Bill frowned with an apprehensive glance across his shoulder as if expecting to see the gaunt Miss McKenzie stalking down upon him reproachfully. Well, he would have the best of her in this affair anyhow; and he announced with great emphasis:

"Then you've got to be married right here an' now! Hold her up, Harry! Bear a hand there, Kluckeroo! Now, Charley, here goes. You want 'er for a wife?"

"Oh, yes, please, Cap'n Bill!"

"Lalee? Lalee! Stiffen up here just a brace o' shakes, an' it'll all be over. You willin' to marry this turnip headed heathen?"

Lalee groaned—

"Oh, I love 'im!"

"Then me, Cap'n Bill Jones, owner an' skipper o' the *Merry Maid,* I hereby pronounce, declare an' otherwise

maintain that you're married; an' anybody try to part you I'll break their necks!"

And so on a reeling deck where the lot of them swayed and staggered like a drunken troupe, and the bride was seasick, and spray came over like showers of damp rice from the hands of Neptune, they were married, just as hard and fast and tight as could be.

"Now get her below an' into a bunk. Only, hell, all bunks are full!" said Captain Bill with hasty afterthought. "But the missionary's not usin' hers. Go along, Harry. Tell 'er the girl's sick an' has to lay down. Break out my oilskins for 'er. An' you, Kluckeroo, come along. We have to kick up a fire in the galley an' make coffee. You're the only one that'll get scalded, 'cause I'm goin' to get out when the water starts to boil!"

AT A SHOUT from one of the crew, Captain Bill put his head out of the galley door and looked aft; then his first impulse was to run, but it was too late. Miss Lydia McKenzie, with a blanket's breadth of oilskins dangling about her and Bill's old sou'wester, to which she was hanging on with a scrawny hand, pulled down over her head, came marching up to him. There was more, and even worse anger in her gray eyes. She loosened her tongue—

"If you aren't hanged it will be because God doesn't longer answer Christian prayers!"

"But they're married!" said Bill, waving a big arm to defend his rights as a shipmaster.

"I heard a woman's groans and entered the room!" said Miss McKenzie in the voice of one addressing a congregation. "There I found—you know what I found! Miss Malloy! One of the sweetest girls on Tehuala, groaning in unconscious agony! Torn from her home! Stolen! You wretched ruffian! I talked with your own men there in the cabin. They say her friends tried to rescue her there on the beach, and you beat them off. No wonder you didn't want me on this ship, but I thank God that I am here. That poor lovely girl, unconscious from mistreatment and sorrow!"

"Now listen here!" Captain Bill shouted. "I've had enough an' it's a lot too much. She's seasick, damn it. I wish to the Lord you was! Don't you go botherin' her till she's able to crawl up here on deck, then b'lieve whatever she tells you. Get away an' leave me alone. If I was half the ruffian I wish I was, I'd throw you overboard!"

Miss McKenzie, flatly taken aback, drew herself up and, speechless with anger, stared at Bill; then she tossed her head a little higher, pulled the old rubber hat tighter on her hair, turned and went aft.

"What you grinnin' at?" Bill demanded of Kluckeroo, who, firmly braced, was holding on to the coffee pot so that, in spite of its wedges, it would not slip from the stove. "After I get my three cups out o' that pot, I hope it overturns an' scalds you," said Bill.

Two hours later Bill was moodily sucking a pipe and staring to windward, when up came Miss McKenzie again. She marched with long, firm, sea-going strides right up to Bill, and stopped. He eyed her with sullen suspicion.

"Captain Jones," she said briskly, "I have never in my life hesitated to say what I think at any time, to any man, or woman."

"I bet you ain't," Captain Bill muttered.

"And now, Captain Jones, I wish to apologize for what I said to you this morning."

"Hey?"

Out came a scrawny hand, offering a handshake. Bill looked at it, hesitated, grinned doubtfully and poked out his brawny arm. Miss McKenzie's grip was firm; and she held his hand while she said:

"Miss Malloy is still very weak and ill, but she has told me how she came to be on this ship. I think it very foolish and unwise of her, but you, Captain Jones, I am glad to say, are a better man than I thought!"

"I know it," said Bill.

"And I have also talked with that sweet little Lalee," said Miss McKenzie, nodding jerkily, but with approval. "I

am glad that you won't permit equivocal relations on board your ship."

Bill stared blankly. "Equivocal" sounded like a mighty good cuss word; but, of course, coming from Miss McKenzie, he had doubts. Nevertheless, he nodded earnestly.

"No'm. I won't have them things on my ship."

"So you married them at once," she added. "And it is perhaps fortunate, in a way, that I am also on the ship—"

"Yeah?"

"—to serve as a chaperon for Miss Malloy."

Bill wasn't quite sure what "chaperon" meant, but he had a hazy notion that it was a sort of boss. He thought Miss McKenzie could fill the berth. He changed the subject by asking if she had had her coffee, though he knew very well she hadn't.

He said he'd see she had it right off, and hustled up Kluckeroo.

When he came back, Miss McKenzie was poking at a deep cut near the corner of the deckhouse.

"Nice piece of teak spoiled by somebody's carelessness," she said severely.

"No carelessness about it, miss. Over in the Solomons, one o' my good cannibal friends took a whack at my head with a ax. I just ducked in time. I shot 'im, so 'twas all right."

Bill was very casual about it; Miss McKenzie eyed him critically. Then, with suspicion—

"Is that one of your tall stories to tell newcomers?"

"You mean, am I lyin'?"

She gave him a twisted smile, nodded a little and said—

"If that's the way *you* want to express it."

"Anybody that wore pants called me a liar half so many times as you've done in the last three hours, I bet I'd 've hurt their feelin's!"

Miss McKenzie gazed quizzically at Captain Bill, then she said with an impulsive frankness that was disconcerting:

"You remind me very much of my brother. He was a big, rough seaman, a downright heathen—God bless him!"

For three or four days, stormy, gusty weather held on, with wet squalls sweeping the *Merry Maid*; and the only one of Captain Bill's passenger list that came on deck was the formidable Miss McKenzie, who paraded about in sweeping oilskins and gave a critical eye to all seawork. Bill soon saw that she knew a ship; and she in turn seemed inclined to forgive Bill many of his sins because of his seamanship.

She was an indefatigable sort of person, sleepless, a sort of nursemaid and stewardess to Jeanne Malloy, little Lalee, and the boy, Lawton, who had a kink in his back that wouldn't come out.

When the weather grew better, all the passengers came on deck. Lalee had brought a big bundle of her prettiest clothes; and Jeanne, whose own dress was torn and still wet, there having been no sun, wrapped herself up in bright calico, like a native, and blushed when the stern faced missionary said, "How pretty you look!" and Captain Bill, with downright frankness said, "Purttiest girl I ever saw. You are that, miss."

And she, half abashed but pleased, said—

"I've told you my name was Jeanne."

But Bill continued to call her "miss"; and he treated her with much the same sort of respect and admiration as if she were a pretty princess and he merely the captain of her ship. He teased Lalee; and he very much surprised himself by developing rather a liking for Miss McKenzie.

"She ain't half so bad as she looks," he told Lawton. "An' I've kicked a lot worse steersmen away from the wheel."

"Are you sure you aren't falling in love with Miss Malloy?" asked Lawton.

"Hell, I fall in love with all purty girls. But I wouldn't carry my sheet anchor ashore for the best woman that lives! No, sir. I'm no man for any good woman to clap a tow line on. An' as for the other sort, hell! Like some poet fellow said, the sea's my girl. An' she's a stormy wench. You hate 'er an' damn 'er, but can't leave 'er. Me married an' ashore? I'd look an' feel like a monkey in red pants. 'Sides, son, if any good woman would ask me to marry 'er—an' you don't suppose I'd

ever do the askin', do you?—I'd know she was crazy; an' who the hell wants a crazy woman for a wife?"

CHAPTER V

CANNIBALS

SOME ten days later Captain Bill poked a telescope at Miss McKenzie and pointed to a haze on the far horizon.

"There's Nello," he said. "An' the only difference 'tween it an' hell is that the best o' the two places ain't got no water!"

"Captain Bill!" she snapped reprovingly, but somehow without sternness.

"And this," said Jeanne, who had been overhauling Captain Bill's log, which he kept pretty haphazardly, "is my birthday. I am now of age to do as I please."

"But your uncle can still do as he pleases with your property, hmm?" Bill asked.

"Until I'm married, yes."

"Stanton here at Nello's got a couple o' mighty fine boys."

"And they have a very pretty sister, Captain Bill!" said Jeanne, laughing at him.

"Meanin'?" he inquired.

"Just what you think I mean," she said, teasingly.

"Lot o' things wrong with that idea, miss. First, old Stanton knows me too well. He's a fine man, but got no use for me—'cept as a blackbirder. Planters all know that when I bring 'em niggers I bring 'em healthy ones."

"You don't kidnap blacks though, do you, Captain Bill?"

Bill eyed her for a moment, then looked across to where Miss McKenzie was peering through the glass.

"No," he said, dropping his voice and swinging an arm vaguely toward the missionary. "I just talk to 'em about plantations as she does about heaven. I tell 'em what a fine place it is, an' how they ought to be glad to go. Nothin' to do but hold sing-sings an' eat. Listen—" he dropped his voice still lower and again pointed with a swing of his arm—"if she'd seen what I've seen she wouldn't think these blacks had souls, no more'n sharks. 'Magine a cannibal with wings, a-singin' in the choir, settin' down with saints to eat o' milk an' honey!"

"Shh!" said Jeanne, a little shocked, but amused nevertheless.

Some five hours later the *Merry Maid* nosed around the shaggy headland and came into a clear view of Stanton's bay. The crew stood about the deck, peering landward. Harry, Bill's ugly halfbreed mate, had the wheel, with careless skill taking the schooner through the channel. Bill stood on the rail, holding to a backstay and shading his eyes with his calloused palm.

The *Merry Maid* had no sooner cleared the channel than Captain Bill hit the deck.

"Down, down! Put 'er down, you son of the devil! Hard!" And, adding his weight to the wheel, he brought her over. At almost the same time he bawled forward, "Break out the rifles an' stand by! There's hell loose ashore!" He called Charley to the wheel. "Out o' the way, you women! Get on the deckhouse. Lawton, get 'em up there! Hell's burned through its hatches an' we've tumbled in!" A moment later, "Stand by to let go that anchor!"

There was shouting and running about the deck. The black crew, in frantic but half jubilant excitement, raced about, some hauling on the jib, some bringing up rifles and dropping them with a clatter on the main hatch and breaking open amunition. Kluckeroo came with Bill's revolver and cutlass, and Bill carelessly tossed them across the skylight grating, not wanting to be bothered with "things tied to 'im" until there was need of their use.

On the deckhouse the women looked at each other in questioning amazement and begged Lawton to tell them what was the matter.

"I am sure I don't know," he said, as mystified as they.

"I don't see a thing wrong," said Miss McKenzie, looking all about with the quick, sharp glances of one quite used to being the first to see things that were not just right. She said, "Hmm! Hmm!" and seemed to sniff the air.

The beach looked as quiet as the beach of a good Christian isle on Sun-

day morning when everybody is at church. Far over to the left there was a hazy drift of smoke as if cleared brush was being burned. There was so much racket, clatter and shouting about the deck, together with the surge of incoming tide on reefs outside the channel, that Miss McKenzie wasn't sure whether or not she heard anything else. She looked at Captain Bill with just a trace of suspicion.

When he came near she called to him—

"Captain Jones, are you sure you are not making all this excitment just to give us women what is called a thrill?"

Captain Bill's jaw dropped a little and he cocked his head up at her, and his language was shocking. She tactfully ignored the outburst.

"But there's not a person in sight—"

"An' if there wasn't the devil to pay that beach'd be black with niggers. It's quiet now, but as we come through the channel they were yellin' an' shootin' up there on the hill."

"I couldn't hear a thing but the surf."

"I could, miss. The minute I saw there was nobody on the beach, I knew there was somethin' wrong. An' look over there to the east, by that bunch of rocks. There's Stanton's cutter—what's left of it. Aground an' burned! An' you see that smoke? That's up by the stockade. They've fired the sheds. An' don't for a minute think the cannibals there ashore don't know we're in here! They're thick as flies at a dog feast, right now, behind the bushes, waitin' to see what we'll do. An' if we don't come ashore an' get cut to pieces easy, in another two hours they'll be out here after us. An' they've got us with tide an' wind in our faces if we try to get out.

An' Stanton's up there makin' a stand for his life. Yeah, I'm trying to give you a thrill—as you call it. You get bit by one o' them poison arrows, an' have to wait two weeks to see whether or not you're goin' to die o' lockjaw, you'll get a thrill! Thank God these Nello cannibals are well supplied with Sniders. They can't shoot straight with guns an' don't put poison on bullets!"

Jeanne's face grew white. She bit her lips and pressed her cheeks with clenched hands, staring now at the beach, now at Captain Bill's broad face, black with a grim frown. Lalee, cross-legged on the deckhouse, did not stir. The fatalistic strain of Chinese blood seemed to give her composure. Her pretty brown eyes widened in a staring look, not shoreward, but at Charley who stood by the wheel.

"What do you mean to do, Captain Jones?" asked Miss McKenzie, after she had peered long through the glass and barely made out the wreck of the cutter among the rocks—which Captain Bill, in a quick glance, had seen with his naked eyes.

"Do? This ain't no time for soft words, miss! An' I'll tell you one thing I'm goin' to do." He pointed toward the skylight grating. "If the niggers lay aboard us an' get the upper hand, the last three shots I've got I'll use on you women!"

Jeanne gasped and drew back with a look of terror. Lalee made no sign. Miss McKenzie's lean jaw snapped firmly and she glared at Captain Bill—

"You would murder us!"

"You've been in missions at Hawaii an' over at Samoa, where natives are human bein's—most of 'em. Like my boys here on board. You don't know about these blacks. I've seen the bodies o' women that were alive when the cannibals carried 'em off—an' with the last bullet I had I'd shoot my own mother! Now maybe you can guess what we're in for."

"Hmm!" said Miss McKenzie, stiffening her shoulders and tightening her jaws. "You don't think I'm going to stand up here and just look on, do you?"

"I don't know what else."

"You hand up one of those rifles and plenty of ammunition. I can use a gun. My brother taught me to shoot. As much as I dislike taking human life, I'm not going to be massacred without doing something about it."

"I bet I'd liked your brother!" said Bill, grinning a little, watchfully shifting his glance from Miss McKenzie to the shore. "An' you can't hear nothin' there ashore now. They stopped right after we come in. Stanton can't see the harbor from his house, so I guess he's wonderin' what's made the blacks stop. He's got twenty good Malaita boys up there

with 'im. If they got inside the stockade, all right. He can hold off—till food runs out."

"Are those Malaita boys to be trusted?"

"No'm—not ordinarily. Only the Nello blacks would kill them just as quick as they'd kill any white man. So they'll put up a good fight—if they got in the stockade. An' now, worse luck, we've got to come to anchor. Don't dare get in close enough for 'em to shoot at us from the rocks. But bein' at anchor when cannibals come a-swarmin' is bad business. You'll see, they'll try to cut that hawser an' put us on the rocks. I'm goin' to stick a man up in the foretop with a shotgun to see they don't.

"An' do you see that longboat up there on the beach? That's a new one. Wonder where Stanton got it. No ship that happened to come along would sell 'im her longboat. Funny! The blacks 'll sure be glad to have that. Make 'em a fine war canoe . . ."

A moment later Captain Bill, having picked his anchorage, shouted and lifted a hand. The halfbreed, Harry, answered from the forecastle, and the anchor splashed. There was a hissing rush of the hawser.

The *Merry Maid,* with all sail off, glided on, and with a gentle pull and tug came to rest. Then she slowly swung about, facing the sea, her stern toward the beach.

"You, there, Kluckeroo! Just because we've got a fight on hand, an' may see the sunset in hell, don't think we want to go without our dinner!"

CAPTAIN BILL, with a hunk of boiled pork in one hand, a biscuit in the other, and a bottle of wine in the crook of his arm, stood at the rail chewing with gusto and scanning the shore. It was good wine, some that he had been saving for a proper celebration; but not being at all sure the cannibals wouldn't cut him off, and so drink everything they found on board, he was out to get the best of them as far as he could.

His crew were lined along the rail, eating and watching, with rifles lying on the deck behind them. They had been through all sorts of trouble with Captain Bill, and he had always brought them out on top.

Captain Bill had offered food and wine to the passengers on the deckhouse. But they could not eat. Jeanne tried to drink a little wine; it did not taste pleasant. The sun beat down with blistering heat, but she felt chilled. Lalee had scarcely moved. Miss McKenzie stood upright, like a sentinel, her hand on a rifle barrel. Lawton lay on an elbow looking shoreward, a rifle beside him.

They had been at anchor for over an hour, and had not heard a sound or seen a movement on the beach. It was uncanny and harassing.

"Don't worry," Captain Bill reassured them. "There'll be plenty of commotion before the sun goes down. These niggers are tricky—in their way. They think maybe we'll get over our uneasiness an' come venturin' ashore."

Minutes dragged by. Captain Bill's keen eyes roved about the shore, watchfully, with now and then a quick glance to seaward. He hoped, but did not at all expect, to see some whaler or trader beating in.

He finished his dinner, wiped his fingers on his canvas trousers, took the bottle to drain it; and with the bottle half tipped to his lips, paused, then stepped forward with eyes fastened on a rocky promontory where he thought he had seen a flash of movement among the scrub.

"Watch to the right there!" he called out, and flung the bottle overboard, absently reaching for his rifle.

Time went by and nothing happened.

"I seen something," he said stubbornly, continuing to watch.

Then the lookout in the foretop shouted:

"Hi! Hi! Man he come!"

The next instant a tall, naked black broke into view out of the scrub and, with bound on bound, leaped barefoot down and along the ragged coral blocks, then plunged with a headlong dive into the water.

And even as Captain Bill, making a jump for the davits, shouted, "Away with the boat! Pick 'im up!" yelps went up ashore as watchers there saw the

man plunge seaward. The yelps became a wild, confused yelling and savages broke through the bush, howling and dancing on the beach. Few of them at first had seen the man, and so didn't know what it was all about, but howled and pranced in frenzy. Others ran on to the rocks, shooting wildly at the swimmer, who came on as a porpoise swims, with long dives, breaking water with toss of shaggy head and gasp for air, then going under.

The *Merry Maid's* boat hit the water with a resounding splash. Two bushy heads cracked together as men of the crew eagerly jumped down. Rifles were passed to them. Two others swung overboard, followed by Captain Bill, who shouted "Give way!" even before he hit the thwart. He squatted in the stern sheets with the tiller under his elbow and the rifle in his hands. The boys of the crew rocked to their oars, grunting explosively. Their eyes gleamed with excitement as they twisted their necks, trying to see ahead of them.

Some of the savages on the beach, seeing what Captain Bill was about, dragged canoes down off the sand and with frantic digging of paddles set out in a race for the swimmer. At that, rifles began to crack from the schooner, covering Captain Bill. From the rocks savages were popping away wildly at the black. There was a flight of arrows, fierce, wild yells.

Captain Bill, from the rocking boat, shot twice, rapidly; and two hundred yards off, a cannibal leaped from his seat right out of the canoe, and hit the water. The canoe, with the other paddlers disconcerted, swirled broadside.

The swimming black was now not more than fifty yards away, and no longer diving. He rolled from side to side, flailing the water, and his eyes set staringly toward the boat. But there was a struggle about his effort that made Bill stand up, lean forward and swear.

"He's been hit! Lay to it, boys! Once more! That's it! Up with oars. Grab him there, Lollo—!"

Reaching arms caught the wounded swimmer who, at the grasp of friendly hands, seemed to collapse as if every bit of his strength had been used up; and he swung like a dead fish alongside the boat as Captain Bill put the tiller over, pointing back toward the schooner.

"Heave 'im in over the bow! Careful, there! Don't you upset this boat! They're comin'!"

Captain Bill faced about, over the stern, crouched low, held his aim, then shot at a line of rowers. The foremost man dropped backward, throwing his paddle loose.

"Nice work, Bill!" he said aloud to himself as the paddlers checked the canoe; but only to drop their paddles and take up rifles and bows.

There was a ragged spatter of bullets, the whir and zip of arrows that fell short.

"Damn them things!" said Bill, looking out warily. "I'd rather be bit by a dozen snakes—full grown ones!"

The Malaita black had been dragged inboard, and lay gasping as if choking to death. Blood oozed from the back of his shoulder, and there was a red froth on his thick lips.

Captain Bill recognized him as one of the boys he himself had recruited, and bent over him questioningly.

"Stanton know we're in?" Bill asked, thinking perhaps the planter had sent the black from the stockade to try to get word to the *Merry Maid.*

The black groaned, closed his eyes and with a weak shake of his head, muttered—

"Him die—die!"

"Stanton dead?"

"So!"

"Were you boys in the stockade?"

The black confusedly shook his head, then nodded.

The canoes from shoreward were racing toward them. Bullets splattered wildly, and the savages shrieked, each urging the other to cut off the boat from the ship. A bone pointed arrow struck two inches below the gunwale, almost between Bill's fingers as he held on, bending low to the dying black.

Captain Bill unshipped the tiller, taking it inboard. His boys could pull in a straight enough line to get under the lee of the schooner, and he needed his hands and arms. He banged away rapidly. The men on board the *Merry Maid* were shouting and yelling to their friends to hurry. Two pursuing can-

oes, in blind haste, struck together, capsizing one; and as the natives splashed in the water, Bill's rowers yelled and jeered.

"Yeah!" said Bill across his shoulder to them. "The devil's out o' luck, my lads! We got a good missionary prayin' for us!"

Bill turned and shook the wounded native, shouting at him—

"The women there ashore—safe?"

No answer. The black, with head thrown back, stared with wide eyes straight at the sun. He was dead.

THE boat scraped alongside the schooner. Captain Bill, with a leap and scramble, climbed on board and tossed a line over to make it fast.

Rifles smoked in the hands of the crew, ranged at the low bulwarks. They were not good marksmen. Bill had never seen a native who was. But his boys were better than the Nello islanders, who simply pointed their guns in a vague way and pulled the trigger. Their manner of fighting was to rush, shoot pointblank, use clubs and tomahawks.

But the gaunt Miss McKenzie, who had hunted in the Maine woods with her sea-going brother, knew how to handle a rifle. She and all the others had come off the deckhouse and into the shelter of the bulwarks; and there, tall and grim, she rested her rifle on the rail and shot carefully. As she had said, she wasn't going to be massacred without doing something about it.

The savages were howling, as if blaming one another, because the ship's boat had escaped them and was now being heaved up to its davits; and the twenty or more canoes, mostly outriggers with eight or ten men to each, turned back, withdrawing.

The crew yelled jeeringly.

"We have beat them off!" said Miss McKenzie, tossing her head and pushing back the loose wisps of hair that had got away from the tight knot at the back of her head.

"Not much!" said Bill. "That's their monkey-fisted way. They'll have a try for us. They've cut off a whaler or two in their day. An' these low bulwarks of ours look mighty temptin'. But," Bill added, giving her a sweeping look, up and down, "I'm sure glad I kidnaped you. An' the next time I up-anchor for any bad island, you want to look out that you don't get stole again!"

Her gaunt face seemed to flush a little, and she looked away, not answering.

Lawton, who was only a sickly boy and had a wrench in his back that hurt as if the devil had his teeth there, looked very pale and nervous.

"Son,'" said Captain Bill, "you go lay down. Give me that gun. Miss Malloy here can load 'em for me—you will, won't you, miss?"

Lawton shook his head stubbornly, so Bill took away the gun, caught him up in his arms and carried him across to a canvas chair that had been rigged for Miss McKenzie.

"You stay there, damn you!" said Bill, rumpling the boy's hair.

"What are we to do, Captain Bill?" Jeanne asked, trying to appear brave, but her eyes going longingly seaward.

"Usually, I don't mind a row. But we're in a pickle. The black we picked up out there lived just long enough to say that Stanton's dead."

"And the others?" Jeanne gasped, taking hold of his arm.

"Can't say. Somebody's up there. Two boys an' the women, maybe. An' maybe some of the Malaita boys."

Miss McKenzie had come close and stood listening. Others of the crew gathered about.

"I ain't had much time for thinkin'," Bill went on. "But I don't need much time to know they've got to have help. I reckon there ain't no way for me to get out o' goin' to hell—" he grinned at Miss McKenzie, who gave him a straight, hard, gray eyed look—"but I ain't goin' to have the devil spit in my face when I get there, an' say, 'Bill Jones, you run off when you might 've died honest, helpin' white folks!' "

Not a muscle twitched in the missionary's stern face; she looked at him steadily, waiting. Bill felt a little embarrassed, but laughed—or tried to.

"You see," he explained, "Stanton bein' dead makes the difference. His boys are all right, but young. An' they

may be runnin' out o' shells. The steamer only comes once in three months, an' not always then—so maybe they're low on food. Them Malaita boys are good fighters, but like all natives, they need a lot o' good, hearty, cheerful cussin' to keep 'em happy. They get down at the mouth, then they'll curl up in a corner an' not care what happens—or else go crazy. An' maybe there wasn't many of 'em got into the stockade. The fellow that tried to get to us had been hidin' out in the bush."

Captain Bill scratched his chin and looked shoreward. Some of the cannibals were paddling about, a long way off, their eyes on the schooner. Others were milling about on the beach, gesticulating, jabbering, as if they held a sort of frenzied council. Bill rubbed one broad bare foot over the top of the other, pulled at an ear, then gazed up toward the thin cloud of smoke that he knew was from Stanton's burned sheds.

"Mrs. Stanton, she liked me," said Bill, half muttering. "Always said I wasn't such a bad fellow."

His crew began to point and call out excitedly. The cannibals were dragging the heavy longboat, that Bill had wondered about, off the beach. Others were clambering back into the canoes.

"They're goin' to have a try at us," said Bill. "You'll see. They'll string out in a wide circle an' keep goin' round an' round us, edgin' in closer an' closer —then all of a sudden make a break from all sides an' lay aboard us."

What he thought was—

"An' we haven't a chance against them if they make a fight of it!"

But he said—

"There'll be more frizzled monkeys in hell 'fore sundown than the devil's had to fry since Noah got drunk!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Mine

By BERT COOKSLEY

Broad are the roads and the things they see,
Strong are the lads who walk them down;
Great is the highway's treasury,
Bejeweled the city's witchery,
And bright the landsman's crown.

But mine be the creak and the kick of the wheel,
And a heartbreak wind across the spars;
Mine be a tough ship's heave and reel,
And iron chanteys from throats of steel
Under the giant stars!

Good are the men of the plow and field,
Good their boons and indemnity;
Sweet to their hearts is the harvest yield,
Sweet to their hands are the tools they wield,
And green their wide rooftree.

But mine be the scream of the cloudy gull,
And the deep lunged freighter's wail;
Mine be the lunge and the lurch and lull
Of a trim ship's, brave ship's outbound hull
Under a world of sail!

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

FURTHER information on finger-printing and the Bertillon system:

Seattle, Washington
Department of Police

In a recent number of *Adventure* a correspondent criticized one of your writers for using the expression (I am quoting from memory): "The card contained a number of thumbprints which would have delighted the heart of Bertillon."

Your correspondent quite correctly states that many people are under the impression that "Bertillon" refers to the system of identification by fingerprint impressions, whereas in fact it is correctly applied to the system of identification by means of anthropological measurements, worked out by M. Alphonse Bertillon, Chief of the Judicial Identification Service of France.

I am a practical fingerprint man (not of the correspondence school variety), and I wish to state that your writer was perfectly correct in his statement. M. Bertillon in January 1884 published a circular in which among other things he recommended the use of fingerprints as a means of identification in connection with his system of measurements, and his model identification card contains a space for the imprint of the right thumb, index, middle and ring fingers. Sir Francis Galton did not publish his work in which he established the theory of the science until 1892, and Sir Edward Henry still later worked out a practical system of classification, which is still in use.

So that M. Bertillon recognized the value of fingerprints for identification purposes well in advance of Galton and Henry, although to him they were but a minor element in his system.

—W. G. ADAMS

A READER challenges a long accepted theory of physics:

Ketchum, Idaho

I have been an interested reader of *Adventure* for a good many years, including the departments, Ask Adventure and Camp-fire, without sticking my oar into any of the controversies that have been hot and heavy from time to time. The battle-smoke of the mountain-lion war seems to have cleared away and an armistice signed, but now in the July 1st number Mr. Fred J. Brownsword asks a question that creates the impression that palatable food can not be cooked above an altitude of five thousand feet. Dr. Fordyce says nothing in his reply to refute the idea.

If I am not mistaken something like this has appeared in *Adventure* from time to time and nothing has been said to contrary. The general

impression has been with the uninformed that food is harder to cook, and certain foods impossible, at certain elevations, but the facts are that elevation—at least up to thirteen thousand feet—has nothing to do with it. Mr. Brownsword remarks that a twenty-minute porridge cooked three hours at five thousand feet tasted like sawdust. Probably that was just the reason.

MY RANCH at Ketchum is at an altitude of 5687 feet, and we cook three-minute oats three minutes, and twenty-minute oats is just what the name implies. Here is a list of a few things we cook on the ranch and the time it takes at this elevation, and at my goat-hunting camp at 10,500 feet elevation as well as all altitudes in between: Three-minute oats, three minutes; twenty-minute oats, twenty minutes; lima beans, two and one half hours; white beans, two and one half to three hours; rice, twenty minutes; spuds, forty to fifty minutes; soft-boiled eggs, four minutes; hard-boiled, six minutes; a meat stew, depending on how tough the meat happened to be, two and one half to six hours.

Doubtless some one will assert that they boiled beans for a day at a certain elevation and that they never got done. True. I have had beans that could have been boiled twenty-four hours at any elevation from sea-level to Heaven and would still rattle on a plate. I have had thirty-five years of cooking camp meals ranging from sea-level to thirteen thousand feet in the Colombian Andes, and if elevation has anything to do with the time it takes I have never been able to note it. Yet I hear that theory advanced all the time.

It is apparently like the hair-rope and rattlesnake idea. I placed a hair rope around my bed when sleeping on the ground in a rattlesnake country for fifteen years only to find a sidewinder in my bed one night when making it after it had lain on the ground all day without being rolled. After a few experiments I wondered why I had been so credulous.

—NED FOSTER

DONALD BARR CHIDSEY, of our Writers' Brigade, recalls an old favorite among old Southern beverages:

New York, New York

Several people, seeing the reference to sherry cobblers in my story in *Adventure*, "The Softening Influence," have asked me what sort of a concoction it is. It may be of some general interest to give the recipe therefor, since I doubt that it is widely known in this day and age. It may even be that some *Adventure* reader will know of a better recipe than mine. *I* don't know of a better one, myself; though I've tried lots. But I'm always curious in matters like this.

The sherry cobbler was a popular drink, in the South particularly, before the cocktail was invented, and before gin was considered anything but a fluid for Dutchmen. And it's a better hot weather drink, right now, than most of the favorites—gin ricky, Tom Collins, John Collins, whisky and soda. I won't contend that it's better than a mint julep, for that would be sacrilegious. But it's a mighty fine drink, and certainly less expensive today than a good julep.

THE recipe: Take a very tall glass and frost it thoroughly. Take a liqueur glass or the small end of a bartender's jigger, for measuring. One of maraschino, one of cognac or a smooth rye (but preferably the brandy), one of fresh lemon juice, one of plain syrup or a proportionate amount of powdered sugar. Fill the big glass with a fairly fine ice—but not as fine as you'd use in a julep. Plenty of this—meaning the ice. The other contents, when the ice is packed in the glass, should fill it about one-third to one-half full. Fill the rest with sherry wine; stir; decorate with fruit.

It's less sweet than it sounds; but you can go easy on the syrup and a bit hard on the lemon juice if a tarter drink is desired.

The best part of it is that it never needs stirring, after the preliminary swizzle, and the longer it stands the smoother it gets. That's what makes it such a wonderful hot weather drink.

It tastes mild, but it's treacherous. It fools you. Impolite guests, accustomed to highballs every sip of which seems intent upon kicking off the sipper's skull and knocking his eyes from their sockets, sometimes sneer after two sherry cobblers: "It'd be a nice drink if it only had a little kick to it." A good thing to do about such guests is suggest that they stand up suddenly. Mostly, they find that they can't. Sometimes, even after only two, they find that they can't stand up at all, much less suddenly. It's that kind of drink.

—DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

ACCURACY and the Thompson submachine gun. Thanks to Comrade Crabb for his interest in procuring for us this information:

Shoshoni, Wyoming

The argument between Mr. Reynolds and Mr. McBride regarding the accuracy of the Thompson sub-machine gun which came out in a late issue of *Adventure* interested some riflemen, and I took the liberty to submit the Camp-fire articles of both parties to the judgment of Major Julian S. Hatcher of the U. S. Ordnance Department. The argument started over the statement made in a story by Reynolds that his hero had flaked off a portion of an iceberg at some 500 yards, and how easy he had done it. Major Hatcher is about as good an authority on ballistics and practical knowledge of all kinds of firearms as any one in the whole U. S. Here is his answer:

"In reply to your letter of September 6th regarding the accuracy and penetration of the Thompson sub-machine gun, records on file in this office indicate that in one test by an expert rifleman at 500 yards, slow fire, the average dispersion was 6 feet 10½ inches.

"A test was made shooting full automatic in bursts of two shots each at 500 yards against a

screen 30 feet long and 6 inches high, and there were 25 shots in the screen out of 400 rounds fired. In the same test, shooting the gun semi-automatic, that is, one shot at a time, there were 32 hits on the screen out of 400 rounds.

"Penetration in a dry Georgia pine plank 6 inches thick showed the following:

Point blank	3½ to 4	inches
100 yards	3½ to 4	"
200 yards	3 to 3½	"
300 yards	2 to 3	"
500 yards	1½	"
600 yards	1 to 1½	"

This penetration was from the back surface of the plank to the farthest depth reached by the point of the bullet.

"Very truly yours,

—J. S. HATCHER,
Major Ord. Dept. USA"

By regular proportion a space 4 feet by 30 feet should have caught all the 400 shots fired. The interesting part would be how much penetration would the 230 grain bullet have in ice at a temperature sub-zero at 500 yards if it has 1½ inches in pine at normal temperature.

—EDWARD L. CRABB

THE appended letter relates to the discussion, in the Camp-fire of October 15th, of the dangerousness of wounded deer:

Chatham, Massachusetts

The attention of Mr. Shaw is called to the fact that Mr. Wilson was minus a hand and was not a one armed hunter as he states. There is no mention of what kind of tree Mr. Wilson was obliged to climb—some are easy.

The writer, a naval officer, has hunted deer whenever he has been at home with his friends on the Sea Islands of South Carolina. The writer killed his first deer in the surf.

In the winter of 1890, Dennis, the colored gamekeeper of the St. Philips Hunting Club, shot down a large buck not far from where the writer was standing. He sounded his horn and the writer walked up. Dennis was bedraggled, covered with blood, his clothing torn. His statement:

"The deer came towards me—I shoot—The deer fall—No move—I lay down my gun—Deer wake up and start to git up. I jump on his back. We rassle—and rassle—and rassle. Finally I git out my knife and cut its throat."

Dennis had shot off one horn and had stunned it—no wound anywhere else.

IN 1899 the writer shot down a buck in the surf and ran in with his gun, caught hold of a horn and started for the beach. The dead came to life and the writer yodeled for assistance. A young man ran in and gave the usual coup de grâce. We dragged this buck up on the beach. The usual jolly crowd gathered—huntsmen, drivers. Dogs were giving tongue, when suddenly the buck got up and charged—just missed one off the party and dropped dead. He was dead this time.

Right after this exciting incident a horn sounded *"Come immediately."* (Three short taps). We hurried and not far away we found Wallace, an old and experienced hunter, reclining against a tree, face covered with blood—holding his handkerchief on a wound on his forehead, and forty yards away lying dead was the largest buck ever killed on any club hunt. Statement by Wallace:

"The deer ran past me and at the cry of the gun it fell. It got up and leaned against a pine tree. I put down my gun and walked up with my hunting knife to give it the coup. Deer charged, knocking me down and ran off on three legs. I got up on my knees, wiped the blood out of my eyes, picked up my gun and killed the buck. This deer received a broken foreshoulder when first hit."

IN LATE years, if alone, the writer after shooting a deer down reloads, walks up about ten yards from the beast and very often shoots it behind the head. Play safe. The negroes say as long as a deer bats its eye it is dangerous: "De deer ax de Lord for tek care of him when asleep—but when he awake he kin tek care ob himself."

On the coastal Sea Islands of South Carolina a deer slightly wounded will always take to the surf and swim out of sight into the broad Atlantic, and strange to say, it will come out of the water in the same place if men and dogs are kept out of sight. On the hunts of the St. Philips club the beach is always guarded. The writer has killed three deer in the surf by waiting, well hidden, for deer to return from an ocean voyage.

—ALLAN STUART, Commander, Medical Corps,
United States Navy, Ret.

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Sponge Fishing

THE sloops are usually kept afloat on their pumps and often rolled ashore by hurricanes.

Request:—"I understand that there is considerable sponge fishing done down in the Bahamas. I would greatly appreciate any data you may give me on this subject. I am particularly interested in the type of boat used, how the sponges are prepared for market, and how they are sold."
—E. C. KENNEY, New York City

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—Bahamas sponge vessels are almost always sloops or schooners. The sloops are Bermuda-rigged, with mainsails laced to the masts with cane rope, native made. They average 20 to 35 feet overall, good beam, and shoal draft. A 30-foot sloop will carry seven boats, with two men to each boat; a skipper and a cook, who cooks in a sand box on deck. That crowd of men will live in the small vessel, along with a load of sponge, for weeks. Their food is rarely anything more than black peas and rice and johnnycake.

Sponge when hooked is placed in a "crawl," which is a stick-fence set in shoal water near the shore, and when dead is trodden and beaten to detach the black slime. When cleaned and dried the sponge is stuffed into the vessel and taken to Nassau, where it is sold in lots, the buyer judging a lot by experienced eye. Then it is pressed into bales for shipment. There are Wool, Silk, Reef, Loggerhead and many other grades, and it is no uncommon sight to see Nassau harbor nearly covered with floating discarded sponges which have failed to sell.

The sponge merchants "outfit" the vessels, and keep a good balance on the ledgers against the blacks who do the work. A sponger rarely sees any money—or perhaps enough to buy a musical instrument which keeps him happy until the season starts again. I lived among the black spongers for nearly two years, and my impression was that slavery has not been abolished. All sponge fishing is done on shares, and I never found a vessel in the Bahamas which wasn't mortgaged to the keel to an outfitter—who eventually owned her. The vessels are of the poorest description, native built mostly, keeping afloat on their pumps, rolled ashore by every hurricane, and rolled afloat afterward and roughly repaired. The pumps are huge wooden box affairs, and are always in use.

There have been many terrible disasters when sloops were lost with all hands; but when I mention that I have seen a 30-foot sloop, after a trip, start for Nassau with nearly forty women and children besides the crew—all bent on their poor homeward bound holiday—disasters are perhaps less frequent than they might be. Black life is the cheapest thing in the Bahamas. Nassau merchants appear to rule the islands, for Nassau alone. There is little romance or nourishment in the Bahamas sponge industry for the blacks, who are a poor lot, and small wonder. Now and then one meets a high grade negro, who gives evidence that they might be much better with better treatment.

Automobile

ENGINE speed, and what limits it.

Request:—"What determines the maximum speed of the modern automobile engine?"
—PAUL F. FOX, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Edmund B. Neil:—The factor which ultimately limits the maximum speed of an automobile engine is what is known as its "volumetric efficiency". As the speed of an engine increases, it becomes more and more difficult to get the explosive mixture into the cylinders through the carburetor, valves, intake manifold, etc, and to get it out through the exhaust valves, pipe and muffler. Finally a point in the speed range is reached when the amount of mixture

in the cylinders explodes with just enough force (and consequent power output) to run the car at some speed which in turn is its maximum. By increasing the size of the carburetor, increasing the lift of the valves and enlarging the inlet manifold, it is possible to increase the ultimate speed of an engine. This in part is exactly what is done to obtain the extremely high speeds of which racing engines are capable, but it has disadvantages which affect slow speed engine performance. Increasing the compression ratio (compression pressure in the cylinders) also helps to increase engine speed and power output. The engine which has the highest volumetric efficiency, i.e. has the most efficient means of charging the cylinders with combustible mixture, will have the highest maximum speed.

Buckskin

CASTOR oil for waterproofing.

Request:—"I have a buckskin coat and would like to know the best kind of oil or grease to put on it to make it waterproof. I don't care about the color."—HARRY BULLARD, Gladwin, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—Castor oil is probably the best and easiest to use on your buckskin. Work it in with your fingers, knuckles and palms—no better dressing for buckskins.

Boxer

HARDENING the hands. Protecting the knuckles and thumbs.

Request:—"How can a person develop bigger wrists for boxing?"

—FRANK ROUBIK, St. Paul, Minnesota

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—Size of wrists is not an important factor. Bones of hands, especially knuckles and thumbs, give way first, or give trouble. Taping with strips of flannel in training, with gauze in actual competition, are protective measures. Best means of hardening hands: Dip in alcohol and salt water solution and punch heavy sand bag. Care in knowing how to hit is important in care of the hands in fighting.

Treasure

OAK ISLAND'S mysterious gold still baffles the engineers.

Request:—"How has the treasure hunt off the coast of Nova Scotia turned out?"

—S. E. RUSSELL, Ancon, Panama

Reply, by Mr. Fred L. Bowden:—You refer to the alleged treasure, buried at Oak Island in the Bay of Fundy. It appears that at different times the owners of the island have sold the right to others to prospect for the supposed treasure on this island.

The latest hunt which I know of is now at a stalemate, due to the fact that they went down for I don't know how many feet, and then did not strike the treasure; or if they did only a scattering of it, and then water commenced to come in in such quantities that the hunt had to be abandoned. The fact of the matter is that the hunters had used up their cash, and with things as they are at present have been unable to get refinanced. Therefore, as far as the writer knows, the treasure of Oak Island is still doing business at the same old stand.

If there is any treasure there it would be of more value historically than intrinsically, I believe, if recovered. As a matter of fact, I believe that the old fellows, if they did cache their treasure, hid it too well, and for some reason were unable to recover it when they wanted it themselves. Something happened there. Either the island settled in the water, or maybe a slight earthquake opened up a fissure in the earth, and now the waters of the Bay of Fundy are leagued against any one who tries to reach this treasure, and, believe me, there is a lot of water in this same bay.

Diamond Expert

ONLY experience can teach you how to tell a Jager from a Silver Cape.

Request:—"I would appreciate any information you can give me as to the best way to acquire a working knowledge of the value of diamonds."

—LEON E. MCCARTHY, Ansonia, Connecticut

Reply, by Mr. F. G. Esterlin:—A technical knowledge of diamonds may be acquired through the study of almost any good book on the subject of precious stones. A working knowledge of precious stones can be obtained in no other way than through constant association with them. Experience in buying, selling, grading, identifying and evaluating these stones is the only method. The difference between a Jager and a Silver Cape diamond is difficult to explain, but is readily seen (or felt) after handling a few hundred stones. The machinist knows how tight to screw on a nut by experience alone—and that's how it is with diamonds.

Gulf Coast

NO PLACE for the amateur canoeist.

Request:—"A friend and I are planning to attempt a canoe trip to Florida via the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. What size canoe would you recommend?"

—WALTER E. LAMOS, S.S. *City of Holland*

Reply, by Mr. Edgar S. Perkins:—A 17-foot canoe with a beam of 32 or 34 inches should be about the proper size. If you are not experienced canoeists, do not make the trip, as the Gulf part of your journey is quite difficult, due to storms and tides. This territory has all been covered by canoes, so the trip is possible; but I have never heard of any one but an experienced canoe handler trying to make it.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelop and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

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Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

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